POLLY
IN THE SOUTH WEST

LILLIAN ELIZABETH ROY
Author of WOODCRAFT SERIES, Etc.

THE POLLY BREWSTER SERIES

POLLY IN THE SOUTHWEST

By LILLIAN ELIZABETH ROY

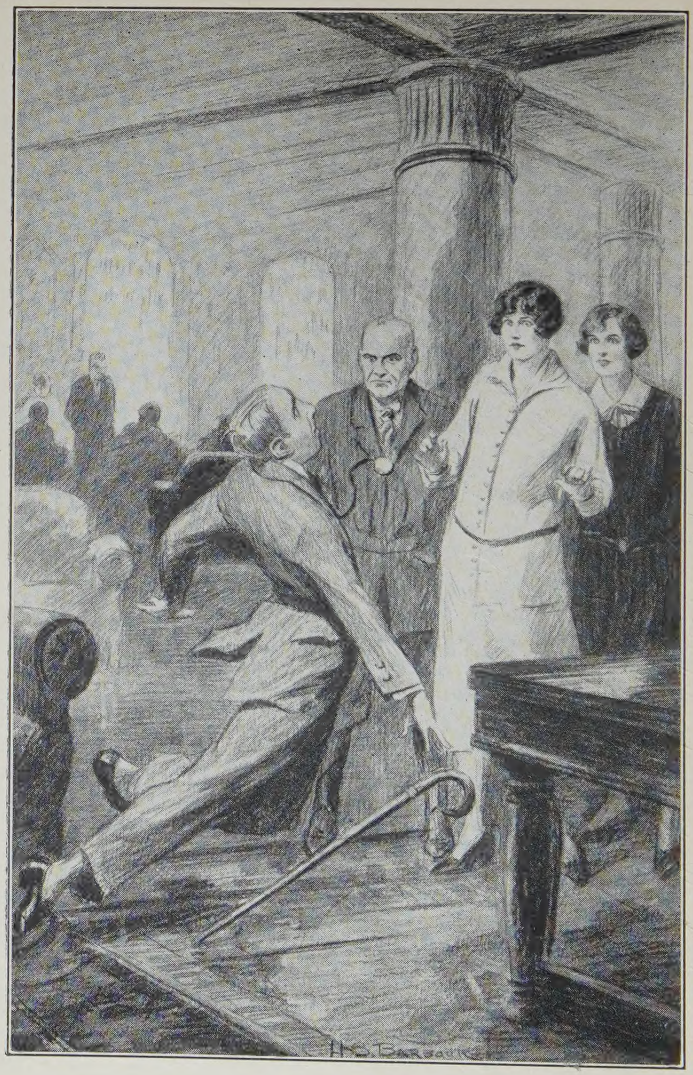
Come with Polly and tour the great Southwest. Marvel at the Indian ways in New Mexico, and gaze spellbound at the wonders in Arizona, then relax in sunny California—as Polly did. On the way, however, you will laugh at Mrs. Alex.'s silly romances and A. A. A.'s ridiculous behaviour, who furnish much of the fun. You will try to foretell the result of Polly's matchmaking between her friends Mrs. Courtney and Dalky. In California you will help funny little Ebeneezer, —with two e's please,—then little Mr. Alexander plans a Movie Play to get his wife away from Hollywood, and it succeeds, too.

Read "Polly in the Southwest" and enjoy this tour with her.

LOOK ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS JACKET

Lorraine Med.

POLLY IN THE SOUTHWEST



ALGY MEASURED HIS FULL LENGTH UPON THE FLOOR.

Polly in the Southwest. *Frontispiece—Page* (52)

POLLY IN THE SOUTHWEST

BY

LILLIAN ELIZABETH ROY

AUTHOR OF

POLLY OF PEBBLY PIT,
POLLY AND ELEANOR,
POLLY IN NEW YORK,
POLLY AND HER FRIENDS ABROAD,
POLLY'S BUSINESS VENTURE,
POLLY'S SOUTHERN CRUISE,
POLLY IN SOUTH AMERICA.

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H. S. BARBOUR

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POLLY IN THE SOUTHWEST

CHAPTER I

NEWS FROM DODO

MR. DALKEN'S southern cruise had come to an end, much to Polly's and Eleanor's regret. Though there had been discomforts and many unlooked for incidents throughout the voyage to the West Indies, and to both coasts of South America, the entire yachting party had thoroughly enjoyed the long pleasure trip.

Now they were back in prosaic, old New York, with its eternal clatter and bang of hustling affairs, and the crush and rush of the mobs of strangers or the workers at recess hours; but they seemed to be tense and nervous at such metropolitan confusion. Mr. Dalken laughed, as he escorted his party from the *White Crest,* upon its arrival at the dock of the Yacht Club—every one seemed irritable and displeased with the city.

"What an awful din!" exclaimed Eleanor, closing her ears with her forefingers.

"I only wish we were back in Buenos Aires—they never make such a deafening racket there," added Jack, frowning, as a pushcart owner bawled his wares directly back of the young dandy's ear.

Jack's friends laughed appreciatively at the foreigner's timely shout, and Jack scowled at the unconscious offender. Then, as if to provide still more amusement for the members of the party,—excepting Jack, of course,—the Italian tried to avoid a mud-puddle in the asphalt, just as the young New Yorker sprang lightly over it. The result was Jack collided with the rickety cart, which was filled with over-ripe bananas and lemons.

The unexpected blow from the corner of the cart sent Jack sprawling upon the street, and the pyramid of fruit descended instantaneously upon him, then bounced in every direction, giving the ever-present street urchins an unusual treat.

Eleanor, the irrepressible, began to sing: "Yes, we have no bananas," but this ridiculous ditty failed to calm Jack's annoyance. The laughter from not only his friends, but from every one who

had witnessed the funny episode, made him turn upon the outraged vendor.

"What do you mean, by running me down like that?" demanded Jack, glaring at the still petrified foreigner. As though this demand loosed the pent-up torrent of the man's grief, he deluged the cosmos with his heart-wrung lamentations. Mr. Dalken and Mrs. Courtney understood Italian, and they could sympathize with the poor man, whose tale of woe might have melted a stone image. Even Jack could not cope with the volubility of the peddler.

Finally, Mr. Dalken stepped over and took out his wallet. Instantly, the bereaved man's face changed its expression, and his voice died down to a murmur of anticipation.

"Here's a ten dollar bill, my man. See to it that your eleven children, now dependent upon your fruit-sales, are comfortably fed to-day. You say they have had nothing to eat for three days—not even such bad fruit as you have on sale—so I am sending this to them." As he handed the money to the vendor, the Italian broke forth in a new strain—one of heaping blessings upon the great monseigneur, the bounteous gentleman!

"I just know he will pick up every lemon and black banana he can find the moment we are out of sight!" declared Nancy Fabian, smiling as she touched upon the truth.

"*I* wouldn't have been so easy, Dalky," grumbled Jack, trying to remove some of the dirt from his coat.

"I wasn't spending my money, Jack—don't worry over that! I thought, seeing that you caused the trouble, that I would apply a part of your quarterly income to assuage the misery of the father of eleven little New Americans," explained Mr. Dalken.

The blank look of disgust upon Jack's face brought forth another ripple of laughter at his expense.

Thus teasing the young man in the party, and laughing or talking eagerly of everything they saw, the four girls followed their elders to the subway station.

But I anticipate: perhaps you are not acquainted with these happy young friends, who just came from the beautiful private yacht, the *White Crest!* In order to introduce you, before the girls proceed to Mr. Dalken's apartment where they were to have luncheon that day, I will leave

them for a short time during their ride on the subway.

Polly Brewster, the favorite in Mr. Dalken's group of young friends, had been born and raised in Colorado. Her home, a great ranch located in the crater of an extinct volcano known upon the map as "The Devil's Grave," had been renamed by Rancher Brewster, "Pebbly Pit," because of the marvelous Rainbow Cliffs which formed one of the boundary walls of the crater. These cliffs were composed of great masses of colored stones, which were readily broken from the towering wall. All about the foot of the cliffs were scattered tons of these shining pebbles. At the back of the wall ran the queer formations of lava which took grotesque forms, such as statues of men and animals. This undulating stretch of hardened lava became known to the surrounding ranchers as "The Imps" and the "Devil's Causeway."

Since Polly had left her western home to study a course of interior decorating in New York City, the Rainbow Cliffs and the mass of hardened lava which extended far back of the colored, pebbly wall had been transformed by modern machinery set up on the grounds, to cut the lava-jewels

into marketable gems. This work, started after the group of wide-awake financiers headed by Mr. Dalken had seen the great possibilities in the stones, now provided most of the income by which Polly, as well as some of her friends, found it possible to travel luxuriously wherever inclination invited them.

This powerful company might never have been formed, had not circumstances developed from that first meeting of Eleanor Maynard and Polly Brewster, at the Colorado ranch where Eleanor went to spend the summer. But, then, you must read that story called "Polly of Pebbly Pit," if you would know how Anne Stewart, the teacher, took Eleanor and her sister Barbara out of their society atmosphere in Chicago, and suddenly transported them to the simple but wholesome life of a ranch. And then, how Polly took her new friends for a trip to Grizzly Slide, where they encountered the terrific blizzard which was instrumental in leading them willy-nilly into a gold-mine.

The gold-mine, so thrillingly discovered, eventually founded the beginning of Polly and Eleanor's introduction to the world—a world of New York adventures, European travels, business ex-

periences, and touring or cruising with their millionaire, self-appointed guardian, "Dalky," in company with other chosen friends.

The last tour Mr. Dalken had planned and carried out very successfully was the Southern Cruise, with the Fabians, the Ashbys, John Baxter,—always called "Jack"—and the two girls, Polly and Eleanor, with their intimate friend and chaperon, Mrs. Courtney. Nancy Fabian and Ruth Ashby had been members of Polly and Eleanor's party in Europe, hence they seemed very much like girls in one family—so intimately acquainted had they all become with each other.

We left Polly and her circle of friends on board the *White Crest,* just after it had resumed its homeward voyage from Cayenne, and now, in this present book of adventures, we meet the girls after landing in New York City. They may have been glad to get home, to replenish a limited wardrobe such as they had been advised to take on board the yacht, when she sailed from New York for the South American tour; but they also felt poignant regret at having to say good-by to the good times they had had.

Consequently, the four girls, to say nothing of Jack, sat about Mr. Dalken's large dining-table,

after their elders had left the room to discuss politics and current events of New York City. They were wondering whether Dalky would feel disposed to invite them again on board his yacht, should he return to Colombia, in company with Mr. Fuzzier, to inspect the plans of the great railroad and canal system which the group of financiers had developed during their voyage between Cayenne and New York.

"Well, now, girls," ventured Jack Baxter, "I'll promise you this much—if Dalky will consent to my sharing an interest in this new project of his, I will move heaven and earth to include you in the prospecting party. But there must be no frills or furbelows, understand? In fact, I'm sure you'll have to travel minus cold cream and beauty make-up, on such a tramp to the interior—it will mean riding-breeches and such, to facilitate progress through the Amazon jungle, no doubt."

Since no one took Jack seriously, the girls now laughed at his grave expression and businesslike tone. It was not compatible with their knowledge of Jack, to believe him in earnest about this new mining scheme of the group of capitalists—a scheme that meant hard work and many sacrifices of luxuries and comforts. Jack had never been

known to give up his lazy self-indulgences, hence the girls' laughter.

A short time after the older members in the party had left the luncheon table, Mr. Dalken returned with a great sheaf of letters in his hand. In the other hand he held an open sheet of paper, which he had been reading just before entering the dining-room.

"Well, children, here's news, all right! I had my mail for the past week held here to await my return to the city; and now, with other letters which had not been forwarded since we left Cayenne, I find a letter from Ebeneezer Alexander—Dodo's father, you know."

"Oh, yes!" was the chorus to this announcement, and the four girls, as well as Jack, expressed eager interest in the contents of the letter.

"He writes me a few personal bits of information regarding certain mining interests we have in common in Arizona, and then he goes on to report favorably on the gold mine at Choko's Find. He seems to have solved the problem of getting at the vein without starting a landslide every time one winks at the peak. He is enthusiastic and tremendously interested in the possible outcome

of his investigations and makes expert miner's suggestions to John Brewster and Tom Latimer. If the tests he now has under way, prove to be reliable experiments, our troubles over the Lost Claim may be buried and forgotten. That leaves us free for new troubles.

Mr. Dalken smiled as he explained this much of the letter, and, finding his audience about to storm him with questions, he held up a hand for silence, and anticipated some of the queries about to be made.

"I know—you all want to know about Dodo! Is she with her Dad at the ranch in Colorado? or is she home with her mother? Is she as enthusiastic over interior decorating as ever—or has she deserted the ranks, for a beau? Is she willing to join an expedition to the North Pole, or will she prefer to spend her millions in eating bon bons and growing obese like her mother? All of which I cannot answer, but which you girls may have the opportunity to ask personally very soon, provided you can be induced to turn your backs upon New York's charm, and give your enlivening company to a sear, old man like me."

"What do you mean, Dalky?" demanded Nancy Fabian.

"Is this an invitation to go somewhere?" asked Ruth Ashby.

"Dalky—are we off for another adventure?" exclaimed Eleanor Maynard, eagerly.

"Oh! Dalky is going west to inspect the mines, and he wants us to go with him!" declared Polly, clasping her hands, anxiously.

Jack said nothing, because he knew he would learn sooner by keeping quiet. And he was right in his surmise.

"Polly comes nearer the truth than you realize; but I'm sure she has Choko's Find and the Rainbow Cliffs in mind, when she refers to the "mines"; but I have the mines of Southern Arizona mentioned here in this letter—and those are the ones I will have to visit without loss of time. In fact, I should have joined Alexander more than three weeks before this, but I failed to receive his cable which was sent to Rio de Janeiro. Possibly we had just left there before it arrived. Now, however, there is no excuse for my dallying in New York when tremendous interests depend upon my personal visit to certain holdings out west. You all know of the plans on foot, to incorporate a land company to exploit and open up the interior of the northern section of South

America, and as stock-holders in that company organized on board the *White Crest,* you appreciate the necessity of unlimited capital. Mr. Alexander's letter offers me a remarkable method of securing necessary funds for the work that Mr. Fuzzier and I hope to launch very shortly. Hence, my haste in saying farewell to New York again, and taking my little kit-bag and starting west. How I should long to have agreeable company with me—provided such friends could be prevailed upon to pass up a shopping season in New York. I shall bear no grudge against the attractive shops, however, should my feminine contingent decide in favor of new styles and ravishing gewgaws."

"Oh, Dalky!" rebuked Nancy Fabian.

"You know better than that, Dalky!" remonstrated Ruth.

"I'm ready to start west on the Twentieth Century—leaves at two-twenty," declared Eleanor, positively, causing all to laugh at her.

"How fortunate, Dalky, that your plans fit in so nicely with my own," remarked Polly, a twinkle in her eyes. "I am about to go home to visit my family, and to judge for myself how the climate of Arizona agrees with Dodo."

Mr. Dalken laughed outright. Then Jack cleared his throat and murmured: "Yes; Polly was speaking to me confidentially, not two minutes before you joined us, of the pleasure it would give her if I would use my persuasive powers in inducing you to consider our invitation to visit Pebbly Pit."

The stares from the girls made Mr. Dalken laugh again, but he hastened to reply to his ward's invitation. "Fine, Jack! I always try to save a dollar, in order to have the more to spend upon other things; now I shall gladly avail myself of this agreeable and convenient invitation, thereby saving all the expense of a western journey. But you do not say how far nor how long this invitation is to last me. Am I to infer that you propose paying all my expenses throughout the western trip?"

Jack was equal to his guardian's question. "The invitation we had in mind to extend to you is for a visit to Pebbly Pit. Nothing was said about expenses of getting there, or of getting back again. It is immaterial to the host and hostess how their guests arrive—by air, rail or afoot. Therefore I would advise you to take enough carfare to insure you a seat in a train, in

case your cross-country walking grows too fatiguing."

The girls now laughed in their turn, and Mr. Dalken added: "Who will pay your fare—you have overdrawn your quarterly account, you know, by running down that poor fruit peddler."

"I have a plan which will provide for all my needs during the next few months, and render the greatest service to a friend, at the same time," was Jack's surprising news.

"Indeed! May I ask what that plan is?" asked his guardian.

"You may, since you are the friend I hope to serve."

"I may be the friend, but I doubt whether your services are very helpful to me—I judge entirely by past services, understand?" retorted Mr. Dalken, gazing quizzically at the young man.

Jack tilted back in his chair, and thrust his hand down into his trousers pockets; then he glanced impishly up at his guardian. "Why, I've discovered how necessary a valet is to your comfort and decent appearance in public, and I have applied for and accepted the position as valet to your respected self. That engagement includes all traveling expenses of mine, and leaves you

ample time and leisure to enjoy your journey with these young ladies. It is an ideal combination."

Jack's plans, inspired upon the moment's demand, provided fun and laughter for some time thereafter. Mr. Dalken had to sit down, he laughed so heartily at the very idea of his ward doing any kind of service for another. But Polly, by her remark, put Jack on his mettle.

"If I were Dalky, I'd make you live up to that agreement—there are four witnesses to what was said, and you ought to prove what stuff is in you, then you can win Dalky's consent to your going to South America with our other boys, when Mr. Fuzzier is ready to launch his land-operations."

"Of course I meant what I just said, Dalky," insisted Jack. And to his utter amazement his guardian took him at his word.

"Done, Jack! You go west with me, to attend to my wants and to receive for your valet services all expenses and a hundred dollars a month. For that, I shall expect you to look after my comforts, the traveling accommodations, hotel suites, autos, and what-not. You may have every other Sunday off for yourself, and an evening once a week. All your other time belongs to me—not even a chance for a little flirtation with a pretty

girl on the train, or out on the deserts of Arizona."

"And how about the girls you take with you—any chance for Jack to say a word to them, now or then?" laughed Eleanor.

"That depends! If such words do not conflict with my own, I may overlook the unusual behavior on the part of a valet."

Mrs. Courtney now entered the room, and wanted to know what could be so absorbing that no one at the table had heard the summons from those in the living-room. Before she could quite conclude her questioning, an avalanche of explanations overwhelmed her. In the confusion of voices, she could not get the drift of what it meant, so Mr. Dalken led her back to the other room and there he explained to his friends what he had told the girls—and he added, he had secured five companions for his western journey. It would develop, as soon as he had outlined his trip, how many more wished to accompany him.

In another moment, he was the center of interest, and all was hushed in anticipation of what was about to be revealed.

CHAPTER II

OLD FRIENDS ONCE MORE

In spite of persuasions, threats, and prophecies of good times to be missed, the Ashbys and Fabians could not be induced to join the proposed party to the Southwest. Mr. Ashby declared that he would have to attend strictly to business after his long vacation, or Polly and Eleanor would have the opportunity for which they said they were waiting—the chance to succeed Mr. Ashby in his enviable shops. Naturally, learning that her husband would not think of leaving the city, Mrs. Ashby was firm in the decision to remain home, too. Ruth did not wish to leave her mother, so that eliminated the three Ashbys from Mr. Dalken's list.

The Fabians were not to be cajoled into going west with the rest of their friends, because they maintained that New York, being their home, was the place for them to recuperate after the delightful though lazy life on board the yacht.

Mr. Fabian said that laziness was a disease which must be cured by hard work for a time, if his family hoped to live during the approaching winter. Nancy found keen enjoyment in being with her old friends again, and so she preferred to remain in the city.

Consequently Mr. Dalken's party consisted of Polly and Eleanor, with Mrs. Courtney as chaperon, and Jack Baxter. Mr. Dalken, of course, since he was the prime leader on this tour. Where they would eventually find themselves, no one knew, because that had not yet been revealed to any one.

"All we now know is this," laughed Mr. Dalken, the last night the friends met at his apartment to bid the travelers good-by, "that we are on our way, and that way may criss-cross the country many times before we reach California."

"But you promised us that we should see California, Dalky, because there is where we are dying to go," exclaimed Eleanor.

"California is a great state, my child," declared Jack, paternally; "and Hollywood is but one small section of it. I should not blame poor Dalky, in the least, if he led you three aspirants

for the screen *away* from Hollywood, instead of *to* it."

This was in the light of a revelation. "Ah!" laughed Mr. Dalken, "now I understand why this intense eagerness to visit California for an extended time. But let me warn you, fair ones—I shall see to it that I am not deprived of my traveling companions just at the time I shall have leisure to enjoy their society. Forewarned is forearmed, you know."

"Yes," retorted Polly, "that adage is as good for us as for you, Dalky."

"Besides," added Mrs. Courtney, shaking an accusing finger at Jack, "it was that valet's own proposition that we remain in Hollywood long enough to have a fling at a movie! He thinks his handsome person may find fame and fortune in posing before the cameras."

The laugh now turned upon Jack, and he had no denial ready. Thus, laughing and joking, the little group passed a merry evening, until the Ashbys said it was time to say good-by and start for home. Soon Mr. Dalken was left alone with Jack to complete the last few items of their packing.

The following day found all baggage on the

way west, and Mr. Dalken, with his party, on board the Chicago Express, leaving New York behind. When the forms upon the platform became a blurred spot, Polly and Eleanor returned from the observation platform and sat down with their friends, Mr. Dalken, Mrs. Courtney and Jack.

"Well, here we are," declared Eleanor, "not a month since we landed in the city, and off again for another jaunt."

"I only hope this trip will prove to be as enlightening to you young ladies as the last one must have been," Jack replied.

"Enlightening! I do not understand you," said Polly.

"Oh, geographically, I mean! You must admit, girls, that your ideas of South America were completely reversed. Did you dream of finding such transportation systems as we enjoyed—from Lake Titicaca to La Paz, for instance? And then to behold such vast tracts of nerve tonic as Nolla found up in the nitrate fields."

The merry laugh which followed this remembrance,—now a funny experience of the past, but once a most painful incident of traveler's luck—launched memory in reviewing other laughable

episodes, and many a smile and giggle drew the attention of other passengers in the Pullman to the happy group.

After a delicious dinner in the dining-car, Mr. Dalken led his protégés back to their compartments once more. Then he showed them the sketch of a map he had made before deciding finally on this journey.

"You can see by this map that we propose to stay in Chicago for a few days, while I interview Fuzzier and his capitalists about the Land Development Company. During those few days Eleanor will have an opportunity to visit her home and family, and the others may visit the Public Library and ascertain where the richest veins of ore can be found in Arizona. It may prove advantageous, in case you decide to stake claims which the United Verde Company overlooked." Mr. Dalken traced the pencil-line upon the paper, from Chicago to Flagstaff, Arizona, and then showed his audience where the Verde was to be found.

"But, Dalky, you do not propose to go straight to Arizona, after leaving Chicago, do you?" asked Polly, wonderingly.

"Not unless you have good reasons to avoid

going to Pebbly Pit," returned he, trying to control a smile, as he thought of Tom Latimer eagerly awaiting Polly's arrival.

Polly frowned. "The main reason of wanting to visit home was the longing to see mother and father, and John and Anne."

"Oh, yes! I see," teased Jack. "Sary and Jeb have no part in your life, and the star-boarder at Pebbly Pit has been forgotten, eh?" By "star-boarder," Jack referred to Tom, who, with John, had remained on the premises to guard and superintend the mines and their output.

Polly flushed angrily, and Mrs. Courtney, thinking that the teasing was becoming too personal, quickly changed the subject, by saying: "Time to retire, I see. The porter wants to make up the berths."

Every individual in their party had been flying around during the past few days, and now that all necessity for haste and hurry was over they felt the reaction. Hence, Mrs. Courtney's suggestion to retire was hailed without protest. There may have been those on that train that passed a sleepless night, but not so with any one in the Dalken group.

The next morning they realized that Chicago

was nearer than they had thought possible, because so much time had been given to sleep. So, when Jack laughingly played the part of valet and gathered up the bags in order to hand them to the colored porter, the girls gazed from the windows to assure themselves that they were really pulling in at the Chicago terminal.

Mr. Maynard had been wired that his daughter and others in her party were to arrive in Chicago on the noon train, and the moment they stepped from the car, he was seen to be awaiting them. In another moment, Eleanor was being smothered against a broad, fatherly breast, and the other friends were smiling sympathetically at Mr. Maynard's joy.

"Well, well, well! Where is my little tomboy? I here behold a tall, up-to-date young woman, whom I almost dread to hug," exclaimed Mr. Maynard, holding Eleanor off at arm's length.

"Nothing of the kind!" retorted Eleanor, making a dive and throwing both arms about her father's neck. "If you have any compunction about hugging in public, your daughter hasn't!"

"I can verify that, Mr. Maynard," added Mr. Dalken, smiling, to hide his own feelings as he

thought of his daughter, Elizabeth, and her habitual aversion to him and his affection. "We find it very embarrassing, at times, to control Nolla's desire to hang about our dignified necks."

"Pooh!" was all the answer vouchsafed him. But Mr. Maynard laughed happily—he would have laughed at any silly thing, so glad was he to have his pet with him again.

The days in Chicago passed swiftly by for those who were to continue on their way to Pebbly Pit. Mr. Maynard gave every moment of his time to his guests,—they had been induced to accept his hospitality, instead of going to a hotel, —and Mr. Dalken found ample time in which to discuss finance with Mr. Fuzzier and the select group of bankers he had interested in his plans to develop the interior of Colombia. Mr. Maynard had already heard the inside information of the scheme, and he had signed up to join the speculators in this vast undertaking.

Finally came the day when Eleanor said goodby to her parents and friends again, and the eager members of Mr. Dalken's party started on their way to Pebbly Pit.

How familiar seemed the prairie lands to Polly, as the train steamed across the vast plains,

and began to approach Denver! Then came a hasty change from the Chicago Express to the local for Oak Creek, and at last the travelers were on the final ride of that journey to Polly's ranch-home.

More than a year had passed since Polly had visited the mining settlement, where the train stopped to accommodate passengers for and from the surrounding country-side. And in that year great progress had been made in the growth and improvement of the place. Polly was astonished to see the mushroomlike rapidity with which the two-story houses had replaced the shacks of the old town; and now streets were laid out and lighted for the convenience of towns-folk, as well as for the ranchers.

The Brewsters had come in full force to welcome the expected friends, and joyous were the shouts of the young people, when all were gathered upon the railway platform. In fact, so eager seemed every one in that circle that no one paid heed to what the others said—but each one laughed and talked effusively without regard to subject.

Two huge ranch-wagons had been requisitioned to hold the happy individuals now about to

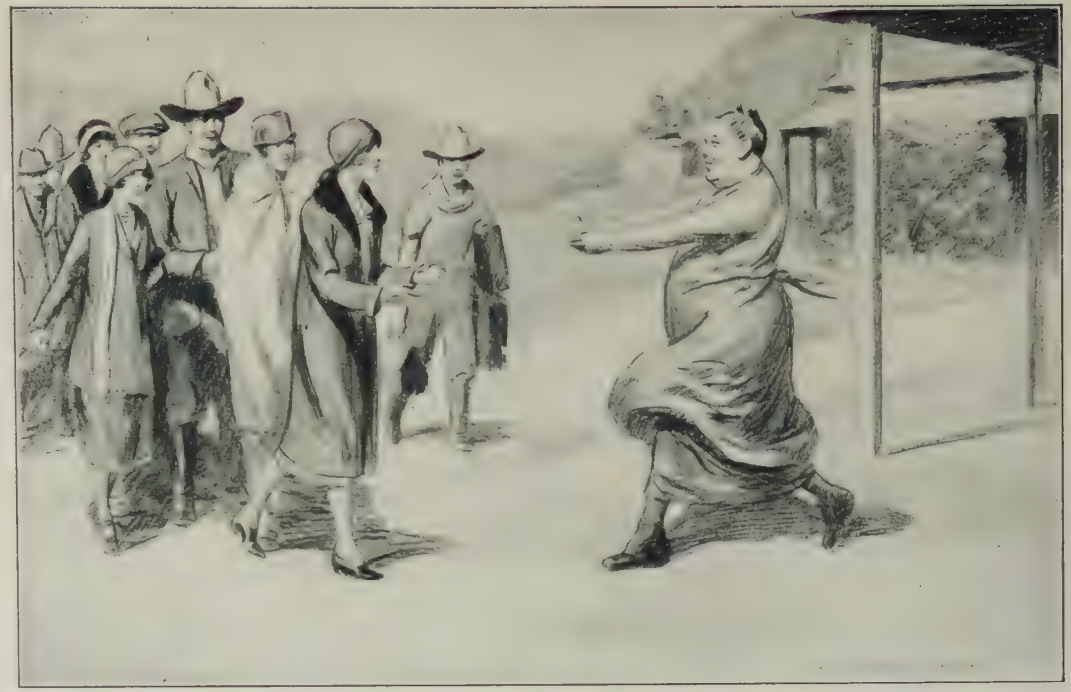
drive to Pebbly Pit; nor did any one notice the rough trail, nor the long trip, before the first glimpse of Rainbow Cliffs came to view.

Here Polly found the greatest change in her old environment: the great grinding mill, the shafts which worked the apparatus used in moving the tons of stones to the mills, and the small railroad train and tiny engine which transported the rough jewels to the packinghouse. And all this activity was well hidden from the sight, by the natural depression of the Devil's Causeway, with the peaks called "The Imps" standing in front like a screen.

Polly seemed genuinely glad to see Tom Latimer again, and Tom's heart leaped high when he realized that his beloved seemed inclined to treat him kindly once more.

Tom had been taking lessons of Anne, since his farewell to Polly at Palm Beach—now seemingly such a long time ago! And it promised a relieved frame of mind for Polly, if Tom would but adhere to Anne's repeated advices and instructions to him. That remained to be seen!

As the ranch-wagons stopped at the wide porch of the solidly-built house which Polly remembered so well, Eleanor and she gazed in wide-eyed as-



SARY CAME BOUNDING OUT TO MEET THEM.

tonishment at the *smallness* of the structure. It had been remembered as being a large, low building; but after all their tours of Europe, South America, and the recent views of the New York and the Chicago sky-scrapers, Polly's old home seemed almost too small to accommodate all these visitors.

Sary came bounding out of the kitchen door, much the same Sary as the one who had welcomed Eleanor and her sister the day they first arrived at Pebbly Pit. Then Jeb shuffled up with a sheepish expression to greet the new-comers. Mr. Dalken knew just how to reach the hearts of others, and he shook hands with Sary and Jeb, saying, as he did so, that he had a token from South America for them in his baggage. That gave him the place of honor, during that visit to the ranch.

Mr. Alexander had been at the gold mine all that week, and John explained to the eager questioners that he would be back the following morning. He had been determined to attend personally to such interests at Choko's Find as might be bettered by his presence and expert advice; and, since he would be absent so long on the proposed trip to Arizona, he thought it best to

forego the pleasure of being present when the guests arrived at the ranch.

The next two weeks sped swiftly by, and then came the time when, business conferences over between the men, the Dalken party, with Mr. Alexander taking the place of guide instead of Mr. Dalken, were on the eve of departure for Arizona and new adventures in the southwest.

"We'll be wondering what you are doing tomorrow, this time," remarked Polly, *apropos* of her mother's saying that the place would seem deserted after the young folks had gone.

"Tom will be able to keep us informed upon those points," was Mr. Alexander's reply. "He is well-acquainted with the ranch-rule, and all we have to do, when we need information, will be to ask him what time the folks do this, or what are the home-people doing now."

Polly looked surprised and failed to grasp Mr. Alexander's meaning. Eleanor must have sensed it, however, for she quickly exclaimed: "Will Tom be sitting at a radio-instrument, or does he carry a pocket-telephone around with him, that he can answer the moment we wish to call him up?" She laughed, but her words showed she wished to be given a cue to Mr. Alexander's speech.

"Why, no! Tom will be right beside you to reply, if you are kind enough to permit it," explained Mr. Dalken.

"Tom! You don't mean he is going with us, do you?" asked Polly, too amazed to disguise her annoyance.

At this tone, Tom forgot Anne's wise admonitions and flared up in anger. "Yes, I am! I find that every one but you seems anxious to have my company on this excursion, because they understand that I am of some value to them. However, that need not interfere with *your* happiness, —I'll take mighty good care not to come within ten rods of you, when it can be helped!" Polly was so astonished at Tom's irritation and his words that she stared at him in silence. Eleanor almost laughed outright at the expression upon her chum's face.

Jack mumbled something about "The worm hath turned," and Mrs. Courtney gave him a vicious dig in the ribs to silence him. Then she whispered behind Polly's back: "You'll go and ruin everything, you rascal!"

Tom now got up and, saying "Good-night," stalked from the room. No one saw him again that evening, and in the early morning, when the

heavy wagon drew up to the steps for the visitors, Tom was already seated beside Jeb. It developed, then, that he had said good-by to the Brewster family before the Dalken party had appeared for breakfast.

During the long drive over the trails which led to Oak Creek, Tom devoted his attention to Jeb. When the wagon pulled up at the horse-trough near the station, Tom shook hands with Jeb and sprang down to assist Mrs. Courtney in alighting. Then he escorted her to the platform and stood conversing with her until the local steamed into the station. He had not spoken a word to Polly since the previous evening.

In the train, he seated himself beside Mrs. Courtney and entertained her with accounts of the tremendous undertaking of safely mining the gold ore from Choko's Find on Grizzly Slide. In fact, so well did he fulfill his part, that that lady voted him one of the most intelligent and courteous young men she had ever met. At the same time she could not understand how Polly Brewster could help loving Tom with all her heart. He was handsome, well-bred, highly educated, and had all the money a girl might crave—and best of all, he had loved her with the earnestness,

persistence, and whole-mindedness of his one-track heart.

"Well, I'm going to see to it that that girl has her eyes opened during this trip!" thought Mrs. Courtney to herself.

But Polly and Eleanor were whispering between themselves, and their plotting might be considered along the same lines as those of the chaperon. Mr. Dalken, engrossed with Mr. Alexander, had left the girls to choose between Jack's society or exchange personal confidences; they chose the latter as being the lesser of two tiresome evils. Hence Jack went forward to smoke, and the two girls began to plan just how they might bring about a settled state of affairs between Mrs. Courtney and their dear friend, Mr. Dalken.

"We ought to have clean sailing in the next few months, Nolla," said Polly. "No other man or woman to interfere in the match, you know."

"But Dalky will be so taken up with schemes, and going off to investigate holes in the ground, that Mrs. Courtney will feel disgusted."

"'Absence makes the heart grow fonder,' quoth Polly, laughing. "Just because he won't always be at beck and call, and because he compares

so favorably with other men, it will be an incentive to her love—if she feels any."

"If! There's that awful 'if' in the way!" sighed Eleanor.

"Well, anyway, Nolla, we ought to be able to find out one of two things on this western trip—whether she does love him, or whether she doesn't! I'm not so sure but that daily companionship on board a private yacht is coma to spontaneous love. You can always tell, from day to day, just what is about to happen, and who will be in the party. Now, out here, where great things occur frequently, these two may discover how dear each is to the other. I've known hurricanes, land-slides, and little things like that, to be instrumental in opening the eyes of lovers." Polly spoke as though the "trifles" just mentioned were casual incidents in a westerner's life.

Eleanor laughed. "I'm from the Windy City, Poll, but I'm sure we wouldn't consider a hurricane or an Omaha cyclone 'little things' to help on a love-affair. Better let nature take its course."

So plotted two pairs of match-makers: the two girls on the one side, and Mrs. Courtney and Tom (who felt intuitively that he had a cham-

pion in her) on the other side. Which pair would win the first place, in successfully bringing about an understanding, in regard to the others remained to be seen—there also remained the long winter in balmy Arizona, during which the two affairs might thrive splendidly. Who could tell?

CHAPTER III

DODO JOINS THE RANKS

BACK in Denver once more, Mr. Alexander found a telegram awaiting him. In it he read that his wife and daughter would leave Colorado Springs and planned to arrive in the city that same evening, as Mrs. Alexander had unexpectedly decided to join the travelers to Arizona.

"Now, what d'ye think of that?" exclaimed little Mr. Alexander, snapping the telegram with impatient fingers. "It's all right for Dodo to come, but my wife isn't used to roughin' it—leastways, she don't care for it, since we got so much money to spend."

"Oh, I shall enjoy having another woman help me to keep all the girls in order," remarked Mrs. Courtney, pleasantly.

"Don't fool yourself, Madam—my wife isn't goin' to be much help in lookin' after others. She demands all the lookin' after for herself. I gen'ally see to it that she has a lady's maid to

wait on her—that lets me out of buttonin' her boots, and runnin' here and there like a beast of burden, to take or carry her shawl, or parasol, or smellin' salts. Since she's takin' to golf and tennis, it's her golf-bag or the tennis racquet I'm expected to carry. I'm sorry to have to explain so much of my family troubles to you, Madam, but you must know that I hate to play caddie, though my wife says I resemble one." The humility and meekness of the little man made Mrs. Courtney feel as though she must stand by him in some way—just as Polly's friends had felt, as soon as they had grown to understand him on that European tour.

"If you really wish to secure a competent lady's maid for your wife, maybe I might help you in seeking for one in the city to-day," ventured Mrs. Courtney, though she realized what a social error she was committing in offering to engage a maid for another woman.

"Oh, say! If you'd do that for me, Madam, I'll never forget it. I want to give my time to Mr. Dalken and the men we hope to meet here in Denver and, later on, in Prescott. If Mrs. Alexander demands my attention, how can I serve two masters?" appealed the little man.

"Just tell me the kind of maid I ought to hire, and I'll move heaven and earth to find one for you," promised Mrs. Courtney; at the same time she wondered what had come over her to make her step into another woman's place in this way, and thus force that woman to give the husband all the spare time he craved to attend to business affairs. But Mrs. Courtney had no idea that she was acting because of her deep interest in the South American land plans, in which Mr. Dalken had not only committed himself as well as his keen business brain, but also had signed for great blocks of stock that would bankrupt him should the scheme fail.

"It *must not* fail!" said Mrs. Courtney, vehemently, to herself.

Thus it came to pass that Polly and Eleanor were invited to accompany their chaperon to one of the best employment offices in Denver that same afternoon of their arrival at the hotel. And to their amusement, they heard and saw Mrs. Courtney interrogate several maids, believing as she did, that maids out west must be much like maids in New York. She was soon informed to the contrary however.

To her questions of "Can you dress hair styl-

ishly?" "Do you wash and mend laces neatly?" "Are you experienced in manicuring?" "and in preparing the bath?" and other personal attentions, she heard to her surprise: "I kin darn socks, lady"; or "I have sewed clothes sence I was knee-high to a prairie-dog"; or, perhaps, the applicant would explain, "I ain't no common general worker, lady, but I kin do plain cookin', er lend a hand at the wash-tub, when it's called for. I even will agree to het the water fer the baths, ef so come yuh-all need it that way."

Hence the polished society woman from the East had to confess herself vanquished in her effort to help Mr. Alexander provide a lady's maid for his wife. On the way back to the hotel Polly made a suggestion which Eleanor thought would prove very exciting, if not practical, for Mrs. Alexander's future peace and personal comfort.

"Why waste time in finding a maid for Dodo's mother when we can get a first-class Indian servant, who will cook, pack, wash, and do everything else for the men, when they have to camp in the mountains; then he can work for Mrs. Alexander, when the men are with us and have no need of the Guide."

"But, Polly, Mrs. Alexander will not need an

Indian to cook or wash for her—she wants a maid to look after her comfort in the hotels along the beaten track," argued Eleanor.

"If she annexes herself and her wardrobe trunks to our select party, she'll have to put up with discomforts in Arizona, even as we are willing to do," declared Polly, impatiently.

"Well, I've done all I could to smooth away the obstacles from little Mr. Alexander's pathway—now it is up to his wife to find her own maid," complained Mrs. Courtney.

That evening Eleanor amused the men by describing the visit at the employment office and the interviews with sundry maids. Mr. Alexander felt deeply obliged to Mrs. Courtney, but she begged him to forget it, since she had not succeeded as she had promised him.

About eight o'clock that same evening, a commotion outside the hotel entrance announced the arrival of Mrs. Alexander and her daughter. This time, the commotion was caused by the taxi running head on into a costly limousine which was waiting for its owner. Not only the scene between the two chauffeurs, but also the hysterical screams from the lady inside the cab, drew a crowd that refused to be dispersed until an officer

came running up to arrest the culprits—should he find any.

Jack and Tom had been the first of the loungers in the hotel-lobby to hurry to the street and watch the altercation between the two drivers; but the moment they saw Dodo gazing anxiously from the taxi window, they sprang across the sidewalk and quickly opened the door.

"Thank goodness, Jack, you're here to get mother out of this!" cried Dodo, in relief. Then she managed to slip her arm underneath her mother's, and urged her to get up and out of the cab.

Mrs. Alexander spied handsome Jack, and quickly decided she must lean upon the strong right arm of a young man, instead of accepting her daughter's equally strong arm. With a rolling of her eyes between pencilled eyelashes, and a plaintive gasp meant to enlist Jack's sympathy, Mrs. Alexander permitted herself to be coaxed from the cab, and half-carried into the hotel. How she loved all this confusion, which she considered better than nothing, in the absence of other ways of announcing her arrival!

"Well, so here you are, my dear!" exclaimed little Mr. Alexander, coming from the smoking-

room, in time to see his wife sink upon a huge lounge in the large reception hall.

Had it not been that Mr. Dalken, Tom, and the ladies now hastened to greet the new arrivals, Mrs. Alexander might have amused herself by scolding her spouse for his neglect in meeting her train at the station—though she had failed to mention in the telegram the time of its arrival in Denver. Being the center of interest, because of the fuss she made over the collision in front of the hotel, Mrs. Alexander forgot to take her husband to account for his oversight of duty.

Mr. Dalken had planned to leave Denver the following morning—in fact, he would not have stopped over-night at the hotel, had it not been for the wire received by Mr. Alexander, in which Mrs. Alexander said she would join the party in Denver that evening.

Now, to end the lady's little tableau, Mr. Dalken looked at his watch. "We must retire, friends, if we wish to get the train to Albuquerque to-morrow morning."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Alexander, "I cannot think of it! I have a great deal of shopping to attend to and, besides, I promised faithfully that Dodo and I would wait here for a certain dear friend

to join us. He leaves the Springs in the morning, and I am sure he will be with us by noon."

"Who is he?" demanded her little lord and master. "Not a fool who's after Dodo's money, I hope."

"Ebeneezer! How can you speak so shamelessly of your child's admirers?" complained Mrs. Alexander.

"Don't worry, Daddy," added Dodo, frankly as ever. "He makes a fine fetch-and-carry addition to Ma's cortège, and I don't mind him a bit —he manages to dust his wisp of a moustache upon my finger-tips now and then, and that seems to pay him for his doglike devotion to Ma."

"But why wait for him to come to Denver?" demanded her father.

"Why—because Ma invited him to join your party on its trip to Arizona. She thinks the invigorating climate may cause certain dormant brain cells in sweet little Algy's cerebrum to open. If that should develop, think how thankful we would be!" Dodo laughed heartlessly.

"Poor Dodo!" whispered Eleanor to Polly. "What a life she must have had with her mother, at such a resort as the Hot Springs."

"Darling child!" cried Mrs. Alexander, reprovingly, to Dodo. "Some day you will appreciate such a devoted love as adoring Algernon has for you. At present you are too young to understand it."

"I am as old as Polly and Eleanor, Ma, in spite of your denials of my true age. I think it is too silly for anything—the way you tell people how grown up I am for my tender age! How much older I *look* than I really *am!* That I ought to be in school, with my hair in pigtails! Now, I'm going to have it out, since Daddy is here to stand by me. The next time you start in to sigh about my precociousness for my age, I'm going to tell right out how old *you* are. I'm going to inform people that you married very late in life, and that I am a child of your old age."

Ebeneezer Alexander smiled approvingly at his daughter's threat, and the others in the group had difficulty in controlling their facial muscles—not that the elders approved of such remarks to a parent, but Mrs. Alexander's was an exceptional case, and Dodo happened to be a very frank, even blunt, character, much like her father's. Mrs. Courtney heard and saw the attitude between mother and daughter, and she was intelligent

enough to understand the situation without any other explanations. She felt that possibly she might be of great service to both.

But Mrs. Alexander now commanded all attention. Dodo's speech could not be denied by her, so she took refuge in her usual way—hysterics. All present, but Dodo and her father, rushed around in search for smelling-salts and other remedies, but the two who should have been most concerned were least concerned. They understood that the third member of the family would come out of her attack instantly, once she realized no one paid any attention to her. Now, however, she continued the pretension as long as there seemed hope of annoying others.

"I sure am sorry to interrupt you-all from waitin' on my missus, folks," finally said Mr. Alexander, "but I got to get to bed, 'cause we're goin' to make an early start."

This made his wife forget her recent indisposition. She sat up.

"Ebeneezer! I told you that I could not get ready to start away from here so early as you plan. I have to do necessary shopping for myself and Dodo," exclaimed she.

"I will pass up the shopping, Ma, because I

really prefer going on with the rest of the party," said Dodo, quickly.

"Children must be seen not——" Mrs. Alexander began, but she suddenly remembered her daughter's threat to expose her true age, and she sighed aloud.

"If you say you must shop fer things, you can stay over and come along on another train. Our's won't be the last one out of Denver, you know," ventured Mr. Alexander, hopefully.

"I am sorry that your shopping will detain you here, and not permit you to go on with us in the morning," added Mr. Dalken, hoping to end the argument, and to show the lady that he was obdurate over her selfishness.

"You men might go on, and we ladies follow in the afternoon," suggested Mrs. Alexander, appealing to Mrs. Courtney.

"No," instantly retorted her spouse. "We got all the mileage on one ticket, and the crowd can't break up that way. You make up your mind to stay and shop, and at the same time hire a maid for yourself to go down to the desert of Arizona, and we'll go on and wait for you at Albuquerque."

The evident desire of her liege lord to be rid of her society, even for a day, caused the contrary

woman to change her plans. "I will sacrifice myself and all my appointments in Denver for you, dear Ebeneezer. What time must I be ready in the morning?"

"Huh! All this time and talk wasted—might have said this in the start!" snorted Mr. Alexander, marching away without replying to his wife's honeyed question.

Now the other members in the party believed Mrs. Alexander was persuaded to go with them before noon the following day. But those who had crossed wills with her in England and, later, on the Continent, might have known her better. The next day proved that Mrs. Alexander had won her point; she acted *too* guileless about it to deceive any one.

It had been decided to take the eleven-forty train from Denver, but this decision came to naught much to the aggravation of the men. Polly and Eleanor, knowing as they did Mrs. Alexander's stock of tricks, had to laugh at this newest one.

Everything was ready, and cabs were called to take the tourists to the station. Bags, girls and all were settled in the taxis, and the men were impatiently waiting for Mrs. Alexander to ap-

pear. Finally, at the very last moment in which they might reach the train by speeding the cars, she came out to the curb. Just as she was going to step inside her cab, she cried in alarm and sank down upon the curb.

Naturally her male companions sprang over to help her up, but she could not stand. She hung limply between Mr. Dalken and her husband. Meanwhile she groaned and seemed in genuine distress.

"Good gracious, Maggie, what ails you now?" wailed little Mr. Alexander, wishing to thrust her into the cab, in order to permit them to drive on.

"Take me back to the hotel! I cannot go——" she seemed to grow faint and her head drooped forward.

"She's ill, Mr. Alexander," whispered Mr. Dalken, anxiously.

"Well, we'll lift her in the cab, and the air'll bring her to, as soon as the driver starts," suggested her husband.

The chauffeur now ventured a disconcerting announcement. "If you-all planned to catch the noon express, you're goin' to be disappointed. Can't possibly make it now, not if you had wings to fly there."

"Why, man, we've *got* to catch it! Made dates with business men for to-morrow," said Jack impatiently, looking at his watch.

"Too bad, but you-all can understand that I'm not talking for my own good, seein' that I'm losin' all these fares to the station," said the driver.

"He's kerrect, Jack!" cried Mr. Alexander, in distress. "No use scootin' to catch that train. Gotta wait fer the five o'clock now." But his expression boded no future peace to his wife, who had been the cause of the delay.

Mrs. Alexander was too wise an actress to revive immediately after she had won her game. She allowed them to carry her into the ladies' parlor, and there she secured the interest of the maid by slipping her a liberal tip to attend upon her.

Mrs. Courtney remained with the sighing lady, but the girls would not join them, lest Dodo express her candid opinion of this unusual incident. In fact, it was all Polly could do to restrain Dodo from telling her mother what she believed to be the truth; and the men were equally engaged in keeping Mr. Alexander from announcing to his wife his intentions to divorce her. Mr. Dalken laughed and explained that a husband had to

prove more serious misdemeanors on the part of a wife than clever acting.

Mrs. Alexander revived quickly, once she had gained her point, and by the time Mr. Algernon Alveston was announced, she had regained her usual strength of mind, as well as strength of ankles—the weakness which had caused her graceful subsidence upon the curb seemed to have vanished like magic.

Mr. Dalken's party had given up their rooms at the hotel, at the time they believed themselves to be leaving for the train; then it became necessary for the Alexanders to engage another suite to allow the indisposed lady to recover without being annoyed by strangers.

Every member of the Dalken party, except Mrs. Alexander, was waiting in the luxurious lounge for further news of the invalid, when a thin, sallow-faced, silver-haired youth pranced into the hotel and glanced eagerly around. He must have been weak-sighted, because Dodo was a prominent figure in the waiting party of friends, yet the newcomer failed to see her.

"Oh, goodness!" whispered Dodo. "There's Algy,—spats, cane and monocle!"

The others had seen the ridiculous-looking

young man, and now they gasped at Dodo's information. Was *that* the cause of their hold-up? Mr. Alexander frowned ominously, as he muttered aloud: "Where'd he come from, Dodo? And how long've you known him?"

"He doesn't seem to know himself where he hailed from," tittered Dodo, getting back of her friends to avoid being spied by the little green eye back of the monocle. "As for time in which to know him, Daddy, a minute or two is sufficient. There's nothing more to discover, once you've had a look at his clothes and general get-up."

Polly and Eleanor giggled, because Dodo's description seemed to fit the object perfectly. Then they suddenly turned their attention to each other and seemed deeply interested in what the gentlemen were saying,—because a bell-hop was seen to take a card from the clerk and leave the desk. In a few seconds thereafter, he began to page "Mrs. Alexander! Mrs. Alexander!"

"S—sh! don't one of you dare to reply to that!" warned Mr. Alexander, making sure that Dodo was safely screened from view by the girls and Mrs. Courtney. "If that swell collar-ad over there's called to see Mrs. Alexander, let her answer the call. It ain't fer you ner me, Dodo!"

Having paraded all around the public rooms on the first floor, the bell-hop was returning to the desk with the card in his hand, when the vigilant clerk spied the Alexanders in Mr. Dalken's party.

"There, you'll find out where the lady is by asking of her husband or daughter—over by the palms," said the clerk. Then Mr. Alexander saw the boy hurry across the lobby in his direction.

The little man drew himself up, to look as majestic as possible, before he turned to stare at the bell-boy. "You say this caller is for my wife? Well, I'll go and entertain him, until she comes in."

Without another word, Mr. Alexander started off, but Dodo felt it would surely create a divorce in her family if her father was permitted to interview Mr. Alveston alone—perhaps he would tell him he was holding up a private touring party, and then ask him to get out of the way. It was well known that Mr. Alexander stood on little ceremony and lost no time in speaking bluntly to people who caused him any annoyance. Therefore it happened that Dodo got her two girl-friends to hurry with her at the heels of her father. All four approached the caller about the same time.

Algernon Alveston sprang up from the great leather chair, in which he had been quite lost, and gave his coat and vest a nervous yank to straighten out any possible creases. Then he flicked off an imaginary speck of dust from his sleeve, and "hem-hem-ed" several times, before he was ready to welcome Dodo and her friends.

Dodo stood still, expecting Algy to join her, then she would prevent her father from taking a high hand in the addition of the young man to the touring party.

Algernon's spirit was willing to fulfill Dodo's wishes, but his head was weak. As he nervously started to greet Dodo and be introduced to her father and the two handsome girls beside her, his extremely pointed-toed shoe caught in the long fringe of the Turkish rug. Presto! away went the dapper youth, as though he was performing a fancy dance for the benefit of his audience. In fact, his body seemed to be suspended above the floor in a horizontal position instead of being upright.

Even so, he might have eventually balanced himself, in order to gain a vertical position, as man was meant to be, had it not been for his thick, heavy walking-stick. As he went two-step-

ping over the carpet, the cane struck the table legs and came back like a boomerang. In another moment it had managed to get between his weak knees, and in another moment Algy was measuring his full length upon the floor directly in front of little Mr. Alexander.

It was all done in so short a time that the girls had not had leisure to catch their breaths, and Mr. Alexander was not provided with any other exclamation than his favorite one, which always came from him like a blast from a small furnace.

"By the Great Horned Spoon! What'cha floppin' in front o' me for? I ain't no royal personage waitin' to have my subjecks kiss my shoe, like-as-how you Briton's do, when you got a favor to ask. Now, git up, and behave like a *real* man." With this advice, Mr. Alexander assisted Algy by kicking the troublesome cane out of the way.

"Ah,—I beg pawdin; aw, I neveh thought of saluting you, Mr. Alexandeh. It was owing to a trifling catch of my boot on the rug," explained Algy, rising awkwardly to his feet, and groping about for his beloved monocle. So nervous was he, that he adjusted the eye-glass and never realized that the fall had loosened and lost the glass.

He wore the fine gold-wire rim as though the glass was there.

"Yeh, I noticed the triflin' trip," smiled Mr. Alexander.

Algy interpreted the smile as one of paternal sympathy, and never dreamed that Dodo's father was actually laughing at the vapid admirer who seemed so feather-brained.

"Weally, Miss Dodo, I must apologize for such accidental behavior on my part. I feah I frightened you a bit, but I assure you it was owing to that trifling trip," repeated Algy, finding it difficult to think of any new sentence.

"As Daddy said, 'never mind.' Remember you are out west now, and not in your oft-quoted British Isles. You must know how awfully democratic father is—just the opposite of you, Mr. Alveston."

"Oh, I see! Perhaps youh fatheh will convert my views on democracy. At pwesent, howeveh, I am a thoroughbred autocrat with tendencies toward my English ancestry." Algy was not very clear about his tendencies, thought Polly, as she stood listening very seriously.

"Naturally you would have ancestral tenden-

cies—every one has," laughed Dodo; then Algy was ready to be presented.

"In these modern days, the young folks gen'ally take after themselves," grunted Mr. Alexander. "All the same, ef this young feller is like his ancestors was, it's a lucky thing they didn't have rugs with fringes on 'em in the old times."

Mr. Alexander's remark was quite lost, however, because Algy was being introduced, and he never grasped more than one thing at a time. At the moment, he was grasping Polly's fingers in order to waft a dainty kiss upon their tips in salute. Then came Eleanor's turn. And at last, Mr. Alexander was introduced. The little man scowled at the excessively polite young man, and seemed to be ready to defend himself in case his fingers were lifted to those thin, white lips.

Just as the formal introductions ended, Jack strolled over and called out cheerily: "Oh, here you are! Found, the friend Mrs. Alexander thought to be lost, strayed or stolen?"

Tom had accompanied Jack, but he remained in the open doorway, annoyed at what he saw. He had appeared just in time to see Algy kiss Polly's fingers, and he felt like cuffing the little dandy's ears for such impertinence.

Now, however, he crossed the room and spoke impatiently to Polly. "Why do you permit that Jackanapes to perform as he did?"

"Why—what do you mean, Tom?" asked Polly, surprised.

"Well, you know very well! A man who loves a girl hates to see her made a fool of in a public place," retorted Tom, forgetting Anne Brewster's advices and allowing his jealousy to show itself again.

"Don't you dare speak like that to me! I am not made a fool of by you or any other man, and I refuse to allow any one to correct me—especially in a public place, and before all my friends." With this reply, Polly turned and marched away.

Too late Tom remembered what Anne had tried to teach him, but it seemed too late now to make amends. He watched Polly go, and then, instead of running up to apologize and explain himself, he decided that this was no place for him. He then went to the porter and asked him to transfer his baggage to a cab which he would get to take him to the Denver railway station. Leaving a note of explanation for Mr. Dalken, he slipped away, and that afternoon was on his way back to Oak Creek. Long before he reached

his destination, however, he had time to regret his hasty act. How he had longed for this very wonderful tour with Polly and her friends, and now because of his demon jealousy all was spoiled again!

CHAPTER IV

JACK AND ALGY ENTERTAIN

THAT evening the tourists were seated in their Pullman, interested in the scenery along the route —no, not all were thus engaged, for the Alexanders were otherwise concerned. Mr. Alexander had not recovered his habitual good-nature since his wife's clever manner of compelling her friends to wait for her latest fad, Algy.

"Why, in the name of conscience, didn't you-all get on the train at the Springs, 'stead of making us this trouble by coming to Denver for nuthing?" growled the little man.

"Ma said she had shopping to do," explained Dodo.

"She could've shopped at Albuquerque, all right," continued Mr. Alexander. "If we'd picked you-all up at the Springs, it would have saved Mr. Dalken a hull day's time. We got a big date on at the hotel in Albuquerque, and now all this tom-foolery might spoil things."

"You are so heartless, Ebeneezer!" whimpered Mrs. Alexander, using a costly, lace-edged handkerchief to soothe her troubled spirit.

"Yeh! I've heard so before," grunted her angry husband.

"Poor Algernon understands a woman's sensitive nerves far better than you ever can, Ebeneezer," continued Mrs. Alexander.

That was a little too much for the annoyed man's temper. He sat glaring across the car at the inoffensive, blonde-pated, insignificant young man, and snorted so that Polly and Eleanor plainly heard what he said. "If your beau-ideal understands *any*thing, he kin understand you, all right, Maggie—'cause there ain't so much to understand as you'd like to think!"

This was a trifle too deep for Mrs. Alexander's intelligence, but she felt the sarcasm in his tone, and she resented the use he made of her detested first name.

"Mr. Alexander! how often must I inform you that my name is not 'Maggie'—I am to be called 'Marguerite,' or nothing! I ought to know my own name, I reckon!"

"It usta be Maggie long enough, afore I struck that pay dirt! If I hadn't piled up money in

spite of myself sence then, you'd still be plain Maggie Alexander, doin' your own washin' and cookin', and not a thought of chasin' young fellers for Dodo to marry."

"Don't you dare remind me of those horrible days!" cried Mrs. Alexander, her face red as a peony, as she glanced covertly around to assure herself that no one else had overheard her husband's revelations.

"I wouldn't hurt your feelin's, if you'd behave and not drag these ever-lastin' dudes around the country, tryin' to tag 'em to Dodo's apron-strings. That gal's as much mine as she is yourn, and I got a word to say about the man she wants to marry! Remember that, Maggie!"

Once more his wife looked daggers at him, and then she reiterated: "I'll have you call me Marguerite, or nothing at all, Mr. Alexander!"

"So be it! I'll remember to call you 'Nothin'-at-all' after this, but I swear I shan't call you no high-falutin names like Marguerite! It'd gag me —tryin' to fit such a fancy name onto my plain, old wife!" As he dropped this last bomb, Mr. Alexander got up and went forward to the smoking compartment.

In another moment Algy, seeing his opportu-

nity, came over to take the vacated seat. But Dodo would not remain beside him, so she got up, excused herself, and joined Polly and Eleanor. Jack saw his chance for amusement, and he crossed the aisle to take Dodo's vacant place.

The train had reached Colorado Springs, and the tourists had been interested in looking at Pike's Peak and Manitou in the moonlight, so that only part of the Alexanders' altercation had been heard by them.

Mrs. Alexander turned to Algy and simpered affectedly: "Oh, what sweet memories come back at sight of this delightful resort!"

Algernon, his slow brain seldom grasping any idea until others had forgotten what had been said, merely smiled vacantly at the speaker and nodded his head. Jack gazed in impatient astonishment at Mrs. Alexander, then he turned and stared at the simpleton.

"The wonderful motor trips, Mr. Baxter, and the stunning women—genuine fashion leaders from New York and abroad, they are—that are at the Springs," sighed the lady, her mind dwelling upon the "fashion-plates" she had seen in the resort.

"Yes, I've heard that Colorado Springs is a

great center to attract the salaried women of New York, Chicago, and European cities, who are paid to display toilettes which are expected to win favor with the ladies—in this way the fashions are made for you, just as they are done in France and England. I suppose you know that?" said Jack, innocently.

"I believe so," murmured Mrs. Alexander, uncertain of what was the best reply to make.

"Yes, yes!" now came happily from Algy, as his expression denoted he had grasped some elusive joy. "Yes, dear lady, I can see you now, wearing one of those becoming costumes, about to motor with your wonderful child, to one of the famous points of interest."

Jack had almost forgotten the exclamation Mrs. Alexander had made a short time before, and she had *quite* forgotten it, since she only spoke to show Jack that she was a member of the gay society at the Springs. Now, however, she frowned disapprovingly at Algy, thinking he was speaking of the parade of fashions for a fee. How could he think that!

Polly and Eleanor were sitting with Dodo just across the aisle, and the conversation of the three was plainly heard. They found much to do to

keep from laughing merrily at Jack's subtle teasing.

Then Dodo whispered to her chums: "Algy will be getting in deep water if he fences with Jack. He'd better watch his step, or he'll go in over his head."

"You say it is too empty to be damaged," laughed Eleanor.

"Yes, but it may fill with water, you see," retorted Dodo.

"It may float like a cork, Dodo," now giggled Polly.

"No danger! It is too much of a vacuum," added Dodo.

"S-sh!" warned Eleanor, hearing Jack continue the conversation with the two other entertainers.

"I suppose you played golf a great deal at the Springs, Mrs. Alexander?" asked he, politely.

"Oh, yes. I simply adore that game," exclaimed the lady. "I have been told that my teeing is a sight to behold! Several elderly gentlemen, stopping at the same hotel, complimented me on my form in using the mashie. That is a very difficult stick to use properly, you know. Then, too, I was told that the graceful manner in which I handled the niblick every time I made a

great drive, was a treat for old players of the famous game."

"I can well imagine how old players of the game were amazed at your form," returned Jack, not a smile crimping the corners of his mouth. The three girls, however, laughed into their handkerchiefs, and Dodo explained her amusement at her mother's words, by saying: "Girls, Ma never took a stick from the bag that Algy toted all over the course. The two of them just walked slowly around, because it was the thing to do, and many a good player swore at them for getting right in the way. One day, during a four-some between some famous golfers, Ma and Algy managed to get right in the way. One of the men shouted impatiently: 'Fore!' And Ma turned to smile sweetly at them, then she replied: 'I know it, thank you. I've heard you four were wonderful players. Don't mind me watching you.' Do you wonder I have to laugh as I remember?"

During Dodo's whispered explanation, Jack had said something which the girls had missed. Mrs. Alexander was replying to him.

"Oh, yes, indeed! Just ask Algy to prove it. He always carried my bag, you see, so he was present whenever I finished the game in a few

hundred strokes." She beamed upon Algy for him to convince the young New Yorker of her skill in beating the record. And the youth, thus called upon before he could muster his wits on the proper answer to give, spoke recklessly, but he never realized it.

"Mrs. Alexander walked so much every morning, over those links, that she really weighed nine pounds less when she left the Springs. I told her it was a pity she could not carry her own golf-bag, because that would have taken off five extra pounds, I'm sure. I lost that much, and I really felt that I had no right to lose an ounce. It almost ruined my figure, losing those five pounds, you know."

Mrs. Alexander sent Algy a second daggerlike look, but he sat smiling upon Jack, who was the one addressed. Jack was not the one to disappoint any one, and in this case he fairly reveled in entertaining those about him.

"I believe it is a real strain—to have to caddy to another. Not so bad, when one carries one's own bag, but the fun is missed when the caddy cannot use the sticks he has to carry."

"You're right there!" agreed Algy. "There were plenty of paid caddies, understand, but dear

Mrs. Alex. is so particular, and I had nothing else to do, you know, so we hit it off fine in golf."

The train had been speeding on its way to Pueblo, and now the tourists saw the outlying sections of that manufacturing city come into view. La Junta would be the next stopping place on the railroad, but the tourists in the Dalken party were not so concerned about getting off the train to visit places of interest as they were in arriving at Albuquerque in time to meet the men with whom the important appointment had been made. Therefore they were going through on the sleeper.

Having left Pueblo behind, the younger members in the party took up their conversation where it had been suspended while waiting in the station. Jack launched an entirely new form of the same game.

"Your name would suggest British nationality, Mr. Alveston."

"Aw, yes!" agreed Algy, fixing his monocle in the latest approved English manner. "My full name, you know, is Algernon Alfred Alveston. Quite unusual, don't you think?—The initials, I mean, A. A. A."

"I should say so!" declared Jack seriously, al-

beit the three girls saw a fine wrinkle at the corners of his eyes. "It reminds one of a grade of flour. In fact, I am sure I've seen the advertisements of the 'Aunt Jane Pancake Flour' with the 'A. A. A.' to tell the quality. I suppose that is what you refer to—the quality in your makeup, eh?"

Algy was not certain that this could be considered a compliment; nor was he certain whether it was a covert insult. Moreover, he had no time for either, just then, because he was engrossed with the euphony of his name. He smiled beatifically to himself as he repeated it.

"Another great publicity stunt your name suggests," continued Jack, finding he had not "gotten Algy's goat," with his last remark, "is the rubber trade. Now, I do not mean you to infer that I mean the slang word 'rubber,' but I am thinking of A. A. A. rubber, such as we use in washers on hose and kitchen sinks. They are handy for other purposes, too. Some folks wear A. A. A. rubber under foot—to keep the soles of their feet dry, you know. I suppose you find it dreadfully embarrassing when your initials remind people of their feet, and of drains, or kitchen sinks."

Algy had to ponder this before he would com-

mit himself, but Mrs. Alexander began to think that perhaps this handsome young man might be laughing quietly at her friend and great admirer. Before she could grasp the situation, however, Jack had diverted her attention to the town the train was now approaching—La Junta.

"I always feel that I must take in a great mouthful of pronunciation before I speak that word. Then it comes with an explosive sort of sound—'La Hoontah!'" laughed he, purposely keeping her from investigating his recent bout with Algy.

"I have heard that it would be far better if the men who attend to the spelling of names and places in America would use simple spelling the way the town is called," said Mrs. Alexander. "I've often thought of writing to the board of men who do this work, to ask them to think of my suggestion. It would be a great deed, to spell names exactly as they are spoken."

"Indeed it would," agreed Jack. "For instance, such a fine idea would save so much confusion that you would be entitled to a memorial in the Hall of Fame, Mrs. Alexander."

"Oh, this is the least of many great ideas I have, but so few friends ever appreciate them.

I really feel that I am repressed in my beautiful thoughts for the world's welfare, because my husband and Dodo never can understand me, you see," explained the poor lady.

"Well, now that I understand you, esteemed friend, you will not have to waste your ideals on Algy. You may share them with me," said Jack, with one of his adoring glances.

Mrs. Alexander felt sweetly thrilled at such appreciation, and suddenly Algy woke up to a remark made ten minutes before.

"Oh, I say! You didn't mean that my initials might be in the class of flour or rubber, did you?" He was quite aggrieved.

"Not at all!" retorted Jack, giving a swift look at the girls, to make sure they were listening. "I was only wondering how it was that you got such a distinguished set of initials to stand for yourself, since the world considers an 'A. A. A.' to be superlative quality. In business references, you know, the 'A. A. A.' signifies that the one mentioned is absolutely trustworthy, and often it means he is financially sound and safe to be trusted. But your initials do not mean that for you, do they? I suppose business references are a foreign tongue to you."

"Aw, yes!" said Algy. "It would be a bore to have to study business, don't you think? I neveh had to work, and so I neveh dabble in trade terms, you know. Speaking of foreign tongues—what language did you mean?"

Dodo now whispered to her friends: "As usual, Algy can only remember the last idea spoken. All the others went over his head, because he could not keep up with Jack's speed in thinking. Isn't he funny?"

"Well, there is no use in trying to explain to you, A. A. A., for I feel convinced that you would never make use of such speech. You are in your right place now, I should judge: keep on being caddy to a patron like Mrs. Alexander, and don't strain your cerebrum by ever aspiring to reach any higher altitudes than those which may be had by climbing up the peaks in a train, or by an auto. Even then, the rarefied air may cause you cramps in the vacuous cellular region inside the skull."

With this grandiloquent speech, Jack got up and shook himself exactly as a shaggy dog might do when he climbs up from a shallow pool of limpid water—a pool with absolutely no depth but which had seemed pleasant and inviting for a refreshing bath. "Oftentimes it happens that reflections

from Nature's surrounding banks mislead one in thinking the water deeper than it really is," remarked Jack, as he sat down beside Dodo.

"No, Jack, I do not agree with you," laughed Dodo. "A. A. A. has nothing about him to reflect—not even Nature. All he has a claim upon is his grandfather's fortune, which he is fast passing on to those who understand how to handle it better than he can."

"If he has a fortune, why is he dangling after you?" was Jack's wondering comment.

"Good gracious!" laughed Dodo, "any one would think I was an ugly, disagreeable, old maid, with only my money to attract a beau."

"Oh! I never meant that!" exclaimed Jack, flushing scarlet. "You know what I think of you, Doe; I *meant* that this simpleton could not appreciate you or your intelligence, but I thought he might envy you your cash. If he has enough of that, why should he worry?"

"To be candid with you, Jack, I doubt if he knows enough to say good-by where he is not wanted. Ma tags him along because he actually does make a good servant—and he has good clothes and pays his own way. Ma uses him disgracefully, as you will see, soon; but Algy doesn't

seem to mind, nor does he realize it. As a little pet dog, he is excellent. And he never barks nor bites, either. That is in his favor, you will admit," and Dodo laughed, as she finished explaining.

"It may turn out to be a fortunate thing that we could not hire a maid for Dodo's mother," said Polly.

"What is that?" asked Dodo, curiously.

Then the girls told how Mrs. Courtney had gone to the employment office to engage a good lady's maid for Mrs. Alexander.

Dodo laughed at the interviews and their termination.

"Just as well you were unsuccessful in the quest," said she. "If mother has a maid, she becomes so dependent upon her for the least act, that she soon grows too heavy to feel comfortable. Then she feels cross, because she cannot dance and act like a girl, and, worst of all, her new costumes never will meet. Life then becomes impossible, until she has dieted down again. Algy is better than a maid, because he induces her to walk and go out with him, and that is good for her health."

At this moment the men returned from the

smoking compartment, and Mr. Dalken said: "It's time for bed, children."

"Oh, dear me, is it?" sighed Mrs. Alexander, suddenly seeming to feel indisposed to move.

"You don't have to go to bed, Maggie, if you like to sit up and enjoy that young man's conversation," returned Mr. Alexander.

"It's not that, Ebeneezer—but I really feel as though I were going to have one of my nervous spells," explained the lady, sighing again, more emphatically this time.

"By the Great Horned Spoon! Don't carry on like that, while we are travelin'!" cried her husband, glancing anxiously about for some one to share his troubles.

"I really can't help it, dearest! When I feel this way I am not able to recline upon a bed, or to think of sleep."

"That's why you'd better sit up all night—and have that boy sit up, too, to get what you need, or to read to you and keep you from worryin' over yourself," advised Mr. Alexander.

"Algy, dear boy, will you pull the bag of medicines from under the seat. Get me the aromatic ammonia, like a good child," weakly requested Mrs. Alexander.

The others of the group, all but Dodo and her father, appeared concerned over Mrs. Alexander's sudden indisposition, and Mr. Dalken offered to go through the Pullmans to find a physician.

"Oh, if you would, dear Mr. Dalken," sighed the apparently ill lady.

"No, no! don't you take a step, Mr. Dalken," remonstrated Mr. Alexander. "Maggie's fits always pass off quicker when no one pays any attention to her. I know, from years' experience, what ails her now. We ain't been amusin' her since we started this trip, and now that we're here to hear and see, we're in for my wife's kind of scoldin'. Ask Dodo about it, if you don't believe me."

But Dodo turned away and walked to the other end of the car. She was wise for so young a girl, but then she had had ample time in which to watch and profit by her mother's silly pretences.

Mrs. Alexander flashed a furious glance at her husband, but she still had hopes of making herself the center of concern, so she slumped down in the seat and closed her eyes, at the same time she threw up both hands and gave a gurgling breath. Poor Algy stood beside her, trembling violently,

and wiping the perspiration from his noble (?) brow.

"Say! Aw, I say! cawn't you folks do something to brace her up a bit? I weally haven't the stwength to stand by and witness the end of a lady. Why, I cawn't bear to see any one kill a fly—it makes me deathly ill, don't chaw know!" Having expressed his sentiments, Algy turned and fled to the smoking compartment.

At this moment Dodo rushed down the length of the Pullman, and excitedly cried: "A fire! Oh, what shall we do—there's a fire on the train."

All signs of illness vanished from Mrs. Alexander. She sprang up and called imperatively to Dodo's amazed father, "Get the small bag, Ebeneezer—it's got my jewelry and money in it! Hurry—and then follow me."

Mrs. Alexander was out of the seat, and tearing for the door, in another second. But Dodo caught her arm and said quietly: "Never mind jumping off, Ma. I had to apply radical treatment to establish a perfect circulation of your blood and a normal action of your nerves, you know. There really is a fire aboard this train, but it happens to be on the engine."

"Dodo's way of curing you, Maggie, is quick-

er'n better than all medicine, I see. We'll have to dose you the same way, if you get more fits while we are on this trip," added Mr. Alexander, frowning at his erstwhile dying mate.

"I'll see to it that this unnatural daughter of mine pays for this breaking of the Commandment. She doesn't know a thing about 'honoring her mother,' or she wouldn't make me a joke to the world!"

With this ultimatum, Mrs. Alexander yanked aside the green curtains hanging before her berth, and disappeared from view. Another yank closed them back of her, and Mr. Alexander heaved a relieved sigh.

"Now, with my blessing, you can all go to bed, children. You needn't worry—there won't be no more fits to-night, I'm sure."

"Before we retire, Alexander, I want to inform the ladies that they need not feel disturbed about leaving the Pullman in the morning," said Mr. Dalken. Then he turned to the girls and Mrs. Courtney, and said: "We have arranged with the two other passengers of this coach to have this particular car switched off at Santa Fé, to give you all the rest you want. Jack is to remain with you and escort you about the famous old city for

a day or two,—or longer if you like,—then you can come on to Albuquerque, where Mr. Alexander and I will be head over heels in conferences. We are going right on, after dropping your car at Santa Fé. And we will meet at the hotel Jack knows about, where we may remain for a week or more."

CHAPTER V

IMPROMPTU AMUSEMENTS

Mr. Dalken's plan met with such approval that the girls slept until late the morning that the Pullman had been dropped at the side-track in Santa Fé. When they were roused finally by the porter, they found Jack waiting impatiently for them to dress and follow him to the hotel. Mrs. Alexander seemed to have recovered entirely from her annoyance of the previous evening, and Algy apparently had forgotten there had been any disturbance in the harmony of the touring party.

"Algy, dear," said Mrs. Alexander, sweetly, as she motioned to her numerous pieces of baggage, "when you take these from the car, don't drop any. I have valuable things in each bag."

"But, Ma, the Pullman porter will look after the luggage," was Dodo's reminder.

"Not mine! thank you. I wouldn't allow one of those strangers to handle one of my bags. In

this desert land, I could never replace my cosmetics and toilet articles. Algy loves to oblige me, so why disappoint him?" was Mrs. Alexander's tart reply.

Algy said nothing, but he gathered the bags in both feeble hands as well as he could. Then Jack, taking pity on his futile efforts to hold them all, waited for Mrs. Alexander to march off towards the door, before he tied the seven leather bags together with an end of rope which the porter had handed him. Thus Algy could swing them over his back, but it was a heavy load for one so slender and limp.

"Oh, Jack! Why don't you carry some of them?" asked Eleanor.

"Why should I? I'm paying the Pullman porter to take all the luggage, and now that Algy is so easy that he does whatever Mrs. Alex. asks of him, let him obey. I am not that kind."

"But he looks as though he might break in half," laughed Polly.

"May be a good turn for him—put some bone and brawn into his frame," chuckled Jack, watching Mrs. Alex.'s obedient follower toddle along the platform at the heels of the owner of the bags.

As the cabs carried the tourists to the leading hotel of Santa Fé, the girls were interested in looking at the interesting sights of the old Spanish city. Jack knew no more about the points of interest than they did, but he pretended to do so, and he drew their attention to the plaza—not easily mistaken for anything else; and he told them a certain old church was the Cathedral of San Francisco, when it really was the Church of San Miguel—but the girls did not find this error out until later.

That first day was spent in visiting the quaint old city and its ancient buildings and the new museum and art gallery. Then the second day was devoted to an auto trip along the scenic road of the Pecos River, through the forests of the Pecos, as far as the forest rangers' headquarters at Panchuela. That evening they stopped at Bishop's Lodge for supper, and drove back to Santa Fé in the clear moonlight.

They had preferred driving in a large seven-passenger car, instead of using two smaller autos, and the young folks felt merry and high-spirited as they crowded into their seats upon leaving the Lodge. Soon after they started along the fine highway to Santa Fé, Jack began to hum a popu-

lar air, and soon the three girls were singing the words. Algy listened, but he never opened his lips, and the expression upon his face seemed to say that he disapproved of jazz-time songs.

At the end of the song Jack turned and spoke to Algy. "What's the matter with your vocal chord, A. A. A.? Has it broken, or can't you sing anything but soprano?"

Algy pondered this query for a few moments, while the girls had to smother their risibles in their handkerchiefs. Then the troubled young man said: "Why, I am just wondering where the vocal chord is? Has it any connection with the spine? You said something yesterday about violent exercise being good for my spinal cord, and now you ask if it is broken." He seemed not to have heard the question about having a soprano voice.

"Why, no, A. A. A.—you are wrong on both counts. *Your* vocal chord, because it is so high, you know, must be located in your cranium. Any one can tell that, by your high-toned airs. Some day it might prove very interesting for you to have a specialist on the brain seek for the Lost Chord in your head. You would become famous

in a day, were he to discover it in your cerebellum," explained Jack.

Poor Algy knew nothing of cerebrums or cerebellums, or of chords,—Lost or Found,—so how was he to know that Jack was making a goose of him. That night, after he had sought his down pillows to sleep, the erratic spirit refused to close his eyes. Then Algy began to wonder what that tremendously wise chap meant by his high-toned airs! How the girls would have teased Jack, had they but known that Algy revered the young man's intelligence—all because that joker spoke of matters pertaining to the head.

Early the following morning Jack rapped upon each door of the rooms occupied by his friends, and informed them that he was ready to start on that day's excursion. There was no need for a second call for breakfast that time—in less than half an hour every one was gathered about the table. True, Algy looked heavy-eyed, but no one paid overmuch attention to him.

"We are going to take lunch and eat it in the Ceremonial Cave at Frigoles Canyon, this noon," announced Jack. "If we take one of the autos usually rented for the round trip, we are limited

to six passengers. That would cost us thirty-five dollars for the sixty-eight miles there and back. If we wanted to remain overnight at El Rito Ranch, the extra cost on the car would be twenty dollars. So I got busy and figured out costs, and I am persuaded to hire a regular seven-passenger automobile, such as we had yesterday, and go as we like, and return any old time. What do you think of the suggestion?"

The car used the preceding day was very comfortable; and the idea of leaving one member out of the party if the regular bus was engaged had no appeal to any one in Jack's party; hence it was quickly decided to engage the large touring car for the round trip—perhaps for the night and next day. Immediately after deciding this question, Jack hastened out of the dining-room and arranged for the auto.

The hotel management packed a generous luncheon for seven guests and the chauffeur, and soon after breakfast had been finished the young folks gathered on the verandah for the start.

Jack sat in front beside the driver and learned much about the wonders of the region. It was due to information thus received that he halted the car some time after Santa Fé had been left

behind, and told his companions about the ranch called El Rito where a splendid luncheon was to be had at a dollar a person.

"But we have planned a luncheon in the cave you told about, Jack!" exclaimed Eleanor, plainly disappointed.

"The driver says we will be so hungry by three o'clock, that an extra lunch will be found most acceptable. That's what I thought we would do with the hamper of good things," explained Jack.

"In that case, we will have no appetite for dinner to-night, and later, about nine o'clock every one will feel starved," objected Mrs. Courtney.

"The driver says it is a most tiresome trip to make in one day, because we will want to climb and visit all the queer caves and ruins, and we'll be thankful for a rest at the ranch to-night. We can get excellent rooms at this time of year for three to three-fifty per. I thought his suggestion an improvement on my plan. Then we might enjoy the ride back to-morrow, early in the morning, far more than coming in late at night all tired and hungry after such a day's outing."

"All right, Jack! We'll do as you say. But tell the driver to be sure and see that we get good accommodations at the ranch," agreed Mrs.

Courtney, having been informed that the others were pleased with the change of programme.

The entire country presented interesting as well as unexpected scenery, and the girls were too absorbed in gazing around to pay attention to Mrs. Alexander and Algy. These two members of the group never saw anything novel or unique in the sights passed. Had they been suddenly perched upon the top-most pinnacle of the Continental Divide they would not have felt the exaltation of soul which would have caused others to groan with the burden of a physical body that held the spirit down upon earth!

Picturesque Mexican villages with adobe houses and old mission churches gave Polly and Eleanor ample opportunities for kodak pictures. The dark-eyed señoritas and their adoring señoras added the touch of Ancient Spain to the views. In direct opposition to these old Spanish scenes, was the grandeur of sheer cliffs and mighty canyons, the road often winding along the very edge of great boulders which might roll and hurl them all down into dreaded depths. While skirting these awesome chasms Mrs. Alexander uttered shrill little screams and clung dependently

to Algy's arm. Poor fellow! He wished he had some strong right arm upon which he, too, might lean during those risky places.

After stopping at El Rito Ranch for an excellent dinner, and having engaged the best rooms to be had for that night, the party went on its way rejoicing.

The rest of the day was spent in visiting the ruins in Frigole Canyon, getting pictures of different views of the ancient Kiva in Ceremonial Cave of the Canyon, and in adventuring to various old cave dwellings.

It was well that Jack had planned for his party to remain over-night at El Rito Ranch, because there was scant time before sunset that evening to see all the wonders of this remarkable place. They wished to visit White Rock Canyon and the Painted Cave, but the darkness fell too quickly for further sight-seeing. Therefore it was voted unanimously to return and see all that was left to see the next morning.

The evening at the ranch house passed merrily for the young people. The victrola provided the dance music, and the younger members in the party were the dancers. But the day had been

fatiguing in spite of the enjoyment of the sights seen, so bed was not sneered at when Mrs. Courtney suggested sleep.

After a hearty breakfast in the early morning, Jack superintended the activities of packing another luncheon and placing his friends for the drive to the Cave and Canyon.

Upon this trip Algy managed to place Dodo between her mother and himself. He had rebelled at the demonstration of trust and dependence shown by Mrs. Alexander the previous day, not that he felt annoyed at the good judgment of his elderly friend, but because he wished to be absolutely free to save himself in case another dangerous route had to be taken in reaching the Cave that day. What could he do for himself if a heavy woman clung tenaciously to his arm?

But Algy had maneuvered in vain, that time, since the auto road ran safely over splendid tableland until the Canyon was reached. Here the driver advised his passengers to get out and walk to the Cave and other points of interest, in order that they might see all the various things along the way.

The Painted Cave was left for the last visit. And just before "doing" that, Jack proposed

luncheon on the edge of the great cliffs along the Rio Grande. The girls hailed the idea, but Algy had nothing to say. In fact, when the others sat as close to the edge of the towering cliff as it was possible to reach in safety, he managed to sit the farthest back in the group. At every shout of sudden or unexpected laughter from the others in the happy party, had any one watched the timorous youth he might have been seen to jump nervously and turn pale.

Then they all proceeded to the Painted Cave; Algy, naturally, lingering behind the others as though he wished to study each strange item seen on the way. Finally the others had advanced so far ahead of the loiterer that they were quite out of sight. This was the timid young man's opportunity to enter an aperture and silently await the return of his friends. Then he could slip out unseen and join them as they returned to the entrance of the Cave. His plan would have worked wonderfully well for him, had not Jack studied the sketch given him that morning by the host of El Rito Ranch. By this map it was found that an exit could be used by going single file through a crevice at the end of the Cave, and emerging some distance away from the main entrance.

The sense of adventure proved a factor in the general approval to follow this exit, so Jack led on and used his pocket flash-light to show the way. The others followed directly after him, and no one dreamed that Algy was not one of the party in the Cave where unusual sights abounded. Each one had been intent upon seeing all that was possible, hence Algy had been forgotten for the time being.

Finally Jack led them out once more to the dry, clear, invigorating air, and then they picked a careful pathway around the cliff to get back to their rendezvous with the chauffeur. Not till then did they realize that one of the party was missing.

"Why—good gracious me! Where did he go?" exclaimed Polly.

"When did you see him last?" asked Jack, wonderingly, as he turned and gazed along the trail to the Cave.

"Really—I can't say," admitted Dodo; and Mrs. Alexander also confessed that she had not missed her usual escort.

"Could he have fallen down one of the slippery sides of the rocky way we came out?" asked Mrs. Courtney, anxiously.

"Hardly! The trail is too carefully guarded against accident," returned Jack.

"Well, anyway, we can't go on without him. We've got to hunt him up now," declared Dodo, impatiently. Then she added, to her mother, "Why don't you tie him to your apron-strings, since he is not capable of taking care of himself?"

"You don't expect me to sacrifice my pleasure by playing nurse maid to your admirer, do you?" retorted Mrs. Alexander.

"You know very well that he never would have joined this party were it not that you insisted that he come. He knows I despise his airs and silly attentions, but you keep encouraging him. So it's up to you to assume responsibility for his safety. He cannot take care of himself, as you can see."

Thus arguing over the hapless Algy, the two arguers followed Jack back to the Painted Cave. But so much time had been devoted to other sights that day, that now it was twilight once more and the Cave entrance was shrouded in semi-darkness.

Meanwhile what had become of the lost Algy?

He found the small cave he had entered quite a pleasant hiding-place. And, seeing a soft covering of dried grass and roots upon the rock at one side, he decided to sit down and rest, while wait-

ing to catch the sound of the voices of his returning friends.

He sat thus for some time, but he preferred doing nothing, even though he had to sit in a low, rock-ribbed cavelet while doing so. He felt drowsy, and he was tired from the long tramps of the day before, plus the constant walking while exploring the places where he saw nothing to rave over—as the girls seemed to do.

As he waited patiently, with now and then a little doze to furnish necessary stimulus to his weary body, he was suddenly roused by a horrid noise at the mouth of his retreat. He had penetrated so far into the small aperture as was possible, and he had no idea of what the threatening danger might be, but he did understand that without notice or explanation the place he was in became unexpectedly dark.

He jumped up and ran back to the opening of the crevice and, there, to his horror, he found that a huge boulder had rolled down and now filled the entrance and exit of his hiding-place. It was indeed a hiding-place now!

Algy's head went round dizzily, and he felt that he would swoon, only he managed to recollect, too, that he dared not give in to unconscious-

ness then, lest his friends pass by during that time and he would be helpless to shout to them to help free him.

Fear and desperation acted like spurs to his usual lack of physical control, and he felt relieved to learn that the fainting spell was passing away. Then he examined the rock in order to see if it might have left a crevice wide enough for his slim form to pass through. But no!

He drew in his breath and cramped his almost flat body against the rough sides of the senseless boulder, and he tore his natty clothes to shreds upon the jagged edges of the heartless obstruction. Then he sat down and began to cry childishly, complaining to the silence of the dark cave the reasons he had for cursing such an outlandish trip —but he did not dare to use any strong language in his extremity, because he was not certain whether it would send him to limbo or not. Hence he remained neutral by merely giving utterance to what he *wished* to do under these trying circumstances. Even in this predicament, Algy felt that he might be overheard by cultured persons, and he flattered himself that he was acting up to the nicest form of politeness.

Loneliness and dark solitude are not conducive

to polite behavior, however, as Algy learned after he had been captive in the small cavelet for some time; still no one passed by on the other side of that naughty rock!

"I'd blast you to atoms with my vengeance, if I had the means!" shouted Algy, to the insensible fragment of cliff before him.

Then he ran up and began pounding it with his doubled fists; but these futile taps merely scratched his flesh and bruised his knuckles, so he desisted and retired again.

After a few minutes,—seemingly hours to the frantic young stowaway,—he ran up to the rock again and strove mightily to shove it ever so little out of its bed, in order to allow him a bit more space by which he might manage to squeeze past, but the stubborn obstacle had no intention of giving way—even ever so little.

"Oh, you mean, nasty, old thing!" screamed Algy, striking at the sharp face of the boulder again and again. "If I was out of here I'd blow you to bits with a ton of dynamite, so there!" Then he sat down upon the hard rock-floor and began to weep helplessly.

"Why was I ever beguiled into coming to this awful country, where there is no pleasure or peace

for a highly cultured young man? Oh, why do I love Dodo Alexander as I do, when I'd rather be heart-free to go about with my friends at Colorado Springs, instead of having a slow death in this cave?"

As he reached the end of his lamentations, he, like Job, lifted up his voice to the high heavens and his wail ended in a yell of fear. It was well he did so, since that ear-splitting yell reached the leader of the rescue party—no other than Jack!

"Now you-all stay out here where it is light, and I'll go in and show A. A. A. the way out. Seeing they have no exits printed upon the walls of the Painted Cave, it is no wonder he lost his way."

Thus saying, Jack ran into the Cave and came opposite the place where Algy sat Indian fashion upon the ground, his nose lifted up in the air after the manner of a hound when he bays at night.

"Say, A. A. A.! Stop that nerve-racking howl, will you?" called Jack, locating him by his cries.

"Oh, Jack! Is that you, dearest boy? Help me out of this death, and I'll never forget you," shouted Algy, in a frenzy of hope.

"I'll get you out, if I can, without your everlasting remembrance," laughed Jack, going over to try to push the boulder aside. But he found it would not budge an inch.

"Say! why don't you come out the same way you went in?" asked Jack, finally.

"I cawn't, you know! I came in, and that blawsted rock rolled down and blocked the way. Do push it away, won't you, precious Jack."

"Say, there! stop calling me names, will you? I'll go right home, and never play with you again, if you dub me one of those mushy things again," growled Jack, glaring at the rock fiercely, as though it were Algy.

"Yes, yes, yes! I'll agree to anything, Jack de—only get me out safely, at once," whimpered Algy.

Jack tried again to move the boulder, ever so little, but it seemed to be wedged tight, and he realized that he must get assistance.

"A. A. A., I've got to go back to the car and get the chauffeur to come and help. Also, we must have a crow-bar, or a length of tree, to pry under the stone and move it. You sit down and play tag with your fingers, while I am gone for help." Without waiting for Algy's mournful re-

ply to stay nearby with him and not leave him alone in the dark, Jack rushed away and was soon out of the cave.

A few words shouted to the girls explained where he was going, and then he was out of sight.

Well, between the driver of the car, a broad-shouldered Amazon of a westerner, and Jack, the dandified New Yorker, and a stout trunk of a tree which had been found and dragged to the cave niche where A. A. A. still wept and wailed for succor, the rock was moved enough to enable Algy to come through the aperture made for him.

But, oh! what a sight he made, when he appeared in the light of the flash-lamp. Jack doubled over with laughing, and the driver hastily glanced back to assure himself that the ladies were not able to see the scarcely covered form of thin little Algernon.

"Here! throw this dust-coat about you, Mister, and button it all the way down, or the girls will jump into the Canyon," roared the heartless chauffeur, as he offered this protection to A. A. A

CHAPTER VI

ALBUQUERQUE FESTIVITIES

Upon arriving at the hotel in Albuquerque, Jack was given a letter written by Mr. Dalken that same morning. In it he explained that Mr. Alexander, Mr. Fuzzier and he had to go on to Gallup in order to confer with several other gentlemen who would be in that place for a few days. Jack was told to conduct his friends to such points of interest as they might wish to see, and to come on to Gallup not later than three days from date.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack, waving the paper at the girls, as they waited for him in one of the beautiful alcoves of the hotel, "We have *carte blanche* to do whatever we please for the next three days. Dalky has to be in Gallup, where we will meet him when we leave here."

"Oh!" returned Polly, regretfully, "I was sure we would have him with us on our tours in Albuquerque."

"What's the matter with me—any complaints

about my manner of playing host?" demanded Jack.

"No, but that's just it, Jacky," laughed Eleanor. "You only *play* host, while Dalky is the real thing."

"Humph!" snorted Jack, then he turned away to Dodo. "I see you disagree with the others—and it's just as well that you do, or I would resign, and take up my valet duties again."

The girls smiled, but Algy had not heard of Jack's engagement as a valet, so he was horrified at what he just heard.

"Valet! Valet! Wh-y,—I was told by Mrs. Alexander that you were quite my equal in society. She never mentioned the fact that you had been a common servant," gasped Algy, horrified at the disclosure.

"Oh! didn't you," was Jack's delighted reply. "Perhaps Mrs. Alex. never knew it herself, or I'm sure she never would have associated with me so intimately." Then Jack sighed heavily and added, to the girls' intense amusement, "I have had a hard life of it—till Mr. Dalken took an interest in my future career and offered me the position of valet to himself. You can imagine how I jumped at such a chance—having been a

waif thrown upon the mercies of a cold world all those years!"

"You don't say!" was all Algy could whisper in his distress at hearing such astounding revelations from a young man whom he had fondly believed to be a millionaire. What a shock to his sensitive self!

"You will pawdon me, I'm suah, Mr. Baxter, but I—ah—feel that I must attend to an urgent errand," stammered the troubled youth.

"Certainly! Certainly!" agreed Jack, grinning broadly as Algy hurriedly left the group to seek out Mrs. Alexander.

"Oh! That's the best joke yet!" laughed Eleanor.

"The little snob!" muttered Dodo, angrily. "Now he'll act so superior to Jack that life will be made wretched."

"It will be the best fun I ever had, Dodo, and I don't want you to spoil it by telling the child the truth about me," said Jack.

"We'll have to warn Dalky and Mrs. Courtney then, or they'll wonder what's wrong with A. A. A.," added Polly.

"You tell Mrs. Courtney, and I'll put Dalky and Dodo's father on," laughed Jack, gleefully.

Before the plotters had had time to plan for their next diversion, the hotel porter came over to Jack and asked politely: "I am holding a number of trunks for your party, sir, and I shall be glad to deliver them to the rooms you direct me to."

"Trunks! Why, we brought our light luggage with us," exclaimed Jack, astonished.

"These were forwarded from the Spring Hotel at Colorado Springs, and they are plainly directed to Mrs. Alexander, care Dalken Party, Alvarado Hotel, Albuquerque," explained the porter.

"Goodness me! They are *mother's* trunks!" cried Dodo, with intense annoyance. "I warned her not to send her trunks, because we would have no need for elaborate clothes. She promised me she would have the hotel management store them for her till further notice. Now what does she mean?"

It was soon explained, because Mrs. Alexander now joined the surprised circle of young friends and used her loftiest manner in addressing the porter and Jack.

"Young man (to Jack), show the porter to my room, and help him unstrap the trunks." She held forth the key to her room as she spoke.

Dodo was about to exclaim, but Jack sent her a look, and the other two girls nudged her quickly to keep her quiet. Jack took the proffered key, and nodded to the staring porter to follow him.

"I got 'em on the freight elevator, sir. We got to go up that way," announced the porter, apologetically.

"Quite right, porter," retorted Mrs. Alexander. "All servants should be made to use other elevators than those their masters use."

"Mother!" exclaimed Dodo, frowning at such airs, but Jack bowed humbly and followed the porter.

"Don't you ever look at me, or speak to me in such a shocked manner again, Dorothy, when I am addressing servants. If there is any reason left in this world of silly democracy since the War, I'm going to find it, and I shall act as though I understood the rights of Class. If you prefer to follow with the rabble along with your father, do so."

Dodo turned away in anger, but she did not reply as usual to her mother's irritating remarks. Then Mrs. Alexander hurried away also, leaving Polly and Eleanor alone to discuss the peculiar situation.

When Jack got back to the hotel lobby no one he knew was to be seen, and he rightly decided that all had gone to their rooms. Then he strolled over to the desk and began to chat with the clerk. When he left him again, the clerk was seen to be smiling appreciatively at a joke.

That day was spent in seeing the sights of Albuquerque, and arrangements were made for a motor trip to Isleta, Laguna and Acoma, including the Enchanted Mesa. Jack had engaged a seven-passenger car as usual, which would carry the entire party, but Mrs. Alexander and Algy refused to go. Dodo looked furious after she had asked her mother privately for her reasons in not being one of the group, and the other girls and Jack had no trouble in guessing the cause—why two members of their group dropped out of the sight-seeing. Jack smiled.

The five remaining members of the outing party enjoyed the day as much as though Algy and Mrs. Alexander had been with them, and it must be confessed that the ride was far more enjoyable with but five in the car, which made it possible for Jack to be with his friends, instead of sitting outside beside the driver.

Isleta and the Ruins were visited that day, but

Laguna and Acoma were left for the following day. This change of plan was agreed upon after Jack was told by the chauffeur of the mid-week dance to be given at the hotel that night. Immediately, the young folks voted to go back in time to rest and be ready for the hop.

Dinner was speedily disposed of, and then the girls hurried to their rooms to dress in the simple evening frocks which they had packed in their light luggage. Polly and Eleanor were soon ready, and then they ran to Dodo's room to help her if necessary. A few minutes after they were comfortably seated and watching Dodo slip her feet into silver brocade slippers, a sharp rap sounded upon the door.

"That's Ma's knock," whispered Dodo, going to unlock the door. She was right. Mrs. Alexander entered the room with a gorgeous frock over her arm.

"I brought your dress for this evening, Dodo," she said, dropping it upon the bed. Then she sneered at the simple gown her daughter wore. "You don't mean to say that you'd be seen in this exclusive hotel in that rag!"

Polly and Eleanor wore similar unpretentious dresses and they wondered what Mrs. Alexander

would think of their costumes! Dodo was not to be so easily influenced as once she had been long ago, while on that European tour. She had developed a great deal of independence since that time, and she had scant patience with her mother's whims.

"This is not a personal affair, Ma, nor is it expected that transient guests dress like all-possessed. You'd look a hundred per cent more exclusive, and appear in better taste, if you'd remove that imported Paris gown and all your diamonds, and wear a simpler rig," advised Dodo, her expression plainly condemning her mother's tendency to display her finery.

"When one has jewels and clothes like mine, it is foolish to keep them in the trunks. How is the world to know we have these things, unless we show them?" demanded Mrs. Alexander, angrily.

"There are places where it is correct to wear them, and there are people who know enough to keep them for proper occasions; but you'll find such society members do not consider this sort of an impromptu hop the place to show off personal effects."

"Humph! I suppose you are throwing Mrs.

Courtney up to me, by speaking of society persons who know how to dress! Well, I will say this much: I wouldn't *think* of traveling in such a dowdy tailormade suit as she wears on this trip. Not a speck of trimming on it, and no panels or drape to conform to the very latest fashion. Her ball-gown most likely will be similar to her convent-like taste in dressing," declared Mrs. Alexander.

Eleanor flared up in defence of her friend's perfect judgment in dressing. "If you knew the price of that exclusive tailormade suit imported direct from London a few weeks ago, and showing next season's advanced styles, you'd change your mind, Mrs. Alex."

But Mrs. Alex. had no opportunity to change her mind at that moment, since a knock sounded upon the door, and Dodo opened it to admit the lady just being discussed. The moment the girls saw Mrs. Courtney, they felt secretly delighted. She wore a handsome though strictly suitable black velvet gown relieved only by a long string of beautiful pearls about her neck. In contrast to the flashily gowned Mrs. Alexander, there could be no doubt as to the good taste of the one dressed in simple black.

Mrs. Alexander must have felt the silent rebuke of the other lady's quiet appearance, for she tossed her extravagantly coiffured head and marched to the half-open door. There she turned and said: "I expect you to wear that dress I brought in, Dodo," then she was gone.

"Ma may expect it of me, but she is doomed to disappointment, this time," remarked Dodo, giving the dress a disgusted look.

"If you are ready, girls, we may as well go down to the dance," suggested Mrs. Courtney, wondering what had caused the suppressed anger so plainly manifested on the faces of the three girls.

"Yes," cried Eleanor, jumping up quickly; "let's get out of here before we explode."

Grasping Dodo by the hand, she dragged her towards the door. Polly, laughing, followed with Mrs. Courtney. They descended and upon arriving at the ball-room where the mid-week hop was held, they found Jack waiting for them.

"The poor valet has to ask some fair lady to befriend him, because A. A. A. and his patroness just sailed past me without a glance. Even a lapdog may be given a kindly look or a bonbon," complained Jack.

"You do not seem to be downcast over your treatment," giggled Dodo. "But come along—I'll take you under my wing and introduce you to the Honorable Algy and my Ma."

"Better not! Ma may send you to bed," warned Eleanor. "Or more dreadful still, Algy may never be seen in your company again, if you persist in associating with a mere valet."

"S-s-h! Girls, remember Mrs. Alexander is Dodo's mother, and as such she is entitled to your respect," was Mrs. Courtney's rebuke.

There were many dancers on the floor when Polly and her friends were ready to join them, and the sight of pretty gowns and still prettier faces presented a festive scene. Since there was but one man in their party, the girls urged Jack to take Dodo for the first dance—in spite of Mrs. Courtney's shake of the head. And off Dodo and Jack danced.

At first glance nothing was seen of Mrs. Alexander and Algy; soon, however, they were seen whirling swiftly around in the dance, drawing nearer and nearer to Dodo and the despised "valet"—both of whom danced slowly and gracefully. The other two girls and their chaperon watched the two couples eagerly.

Algy seemed to think that speed in dancing proved he was a past master in the art, so he, metaphorically speaking, "stepped on the gas" at every other round, gathering momentum as he whirled. Naturally his partner had to keep step with him or give up the race. But Mrs. Alexander was not the woman to give up a dancing partner, even though that partner flew around like a mad kitten after a ball of wool.

As might have been foreseen by the watchers of this comedy, Algy and his partner, in blindly wheeling fast and furiously, collided with Dodo and Jack, who were chatting and enjoying the rhythm of the music and the motion of the sliding steps.

Jack seemed slender in black evening clothes, but he was a splendid athlete, and his body was hard as nails. Thus, when the soft pulpy form of Mrs. Alexander struck him back to back, it was not Jack who grunted and fell over.

Algy, being a "fragile darling," and never prepared for emergencies, was lifted from his feet when Mrs. Alexander began to slip and gyrate, while endeavoring to balance in an upright position. The grip the lady maintained upon the only tangible thing at hand made Algy hop-skip-and-

jump about like a Jack-on-a-stick. But all this performing took only a few moments to accomplish, then came the end—upon the floor.

For such a little fellow Algy needed more room in sprawling than three big men could have covered. Consequently he managed to trip several other couples who could not avoid dancing close to the danger zone, and they, too, began to slip and slide about grotesquely before they subsided upon the floor.

Polly and Eleanor, try as they would, could not help laughing at the amusing scene; and others in every direction joined in the general laugh. The music now came to an abrupt end, leaving the embarrassed group of unfortunates the center of attraction.

Mrs. Alexander, much too stout for her elaborate gown, had paid the room-maid handsomely to strap her into her harness. Then she found it possible to work herself into the tight-fitting costume. She had had difficulty in breathing, however, and soon after Algy began to whirl her giddily around the floor, she wished with all her heart that she had had courage to refuse to dance. But she had heard that dancing made people slen-

der and sylphlike, so she had succumbed to the temptation.

After turning about like a whirligig, Mrs. Alexander had appreciated why dancing made one thin—she was perspiring freely and had no opportunity in which to dry her streaming face. Her breath had become shorter and shorter, and her head seemed to swim. At the last she felt that she must drop or die, but instead, had come the collision.

Now she doubled up on the smooth floor, gasping madly for a bit of air. The more she struggled to gain a foothold on the waxed wood, the more she slid and gasped. Finally a desperately deep breath broke the bonds which held her lungs and heart as in a vice, and instantly there sounded the r-r-r-ip of a tight seam.

"Ah!" sighed the wearer of the armor, as she released her pent-up lungs and thought she would fly from sheer lightness. Then she recollected where she was. This reminded her that she must divert the laughter from herself to others, so she instantly pretended to faint—to rouse sympathy in place of ridicule. And she was an adept at fainting.

"Oh, I say! Mah deah Mrs. Alex.! Do try to sit up," cried Algy, plaintively, when he saw her head roll back and her eyes close.

But his partner seemingly was dead to his supplications. He managed to stand up, and then he gazed helplessly around for some one to come and advise him what to do. His eyes, in their roving, found the despised valet watching him with ill-concealed amusement.

"Oh, I say theah! Come heah, and lift this lady from the floah." But Jack turned and gave his attention to the girls. Mrs. Courtney seemed to be urging them to do something against which they rebelled.

Algy felt angry at a common valet's treatment of him, and now he cried aloud shrilly: "I say! Mr. Dalken's valet—you, Baxtah! Come heah directly, and lift this lady to a chaih!"

Several men sprang over at the call, believing the poor woman to be injured; and finally Dodo had to go with Mrs. Courtney to see that her mother was not hurt. Dodo had declared the truth—that she knew her mother too well to fear that anything worse than chagrin could be the matter with her.

Even while Mrs. Alexander was planning what to do, should they try to carry her to an alcove to revive, an unexpected turn was given events, by the presence of a physician. He kneeled upon the floor beside the prostrate woman and took her wrist between his practised fingers. As he counted the strong, regular beats, he began to smile.

Evidently the doctor had no patience with women who played upon the sympathy of their friends. He must have seen other cases similar to Mrs. Alexander's, because he applied a drastic remedy.

"Here, gentlemen—lend me a pocket-knife, will you? I must slash this gown up and down to give the patient plenty of room to breathe. And you, my good woman, remove her jeweled dog-collar so her neck muscles can act. Hold it till she revives—it's only paste, I suppose."

The very idea of slashing that wonderful gown was bad enough to bring consciousness back to a dying woman, but add to that the awful fact that a ten-thousand-dollar collar would be handled as though the stones were paste, was too much! Suddenly Mrs. Alexander sat up!

She forgot to regain consciousness slowly and gracefully, but she remembered the heartless doctor's words—only paste!

"Don't you dare ruin my gown!" cried she, catching hold of the hand that would devastate a Parisian model. "As for my diamonds being paste! Well, I can show you the insurance on them. Paste, indeed!"

With this retort, Mrs. Alexander managed to stand on her feet, though it was not done without awkwardness.

"There!" muttered Dodo, flushing scarlet, "Didn't I tell you so?" And the poor girl turned away quickly and hurried from the room. Mrs. Courtney followed immediately, beckoning Polly and Eleanor to come, too.

CHAPTER VII

JACK'S VALET DUTIES

After a full realization of what must be the general opinion of Mrs. Alexander in the hotel, every one in the Dalken party felt eager to get away from Albuquerque. Hence, the morning following the hop and its disastrous result for Dodo's mother, the tourists left for Gallup.

They had not thought of telegraphing to Mr. Dalken of their changed plans, but Jack had been thoughtful enough to wire the hotel management to reserve several of their best suites for his party. Thus they found everything in readiness for them, but Mr. Dalken was out with his two associates, Mr. Alexander and Mr. Fuzzier. Jack thought the hotel manager would tell Mr. Dalken that his friends were due to arrive that day, but the manager, not knowing that the signed name of "John Baxter," upon the telegram meant anything to his star guest never mentioned it.

Consequently there was a great surprise await-

ing Mr. Alexander and Mr. Dalken that evening when they came back to their hotel: an unpleasant surprise for the little miner-millionaire, and a pleasant one for the New York millionaire.

"By the Great Horned Spoon, Dalken! Ain't that my wife sittin' over there with that silver-headed dude?" whispered Mr. Alexander, as he caught a glimpse of a gorgeously gowned woman conversing eagerly with the great and only A. A. A.

"Why—yes," responded Mr. Dalken, as he caught hold of his companion's arm, to prevent him from getting away again—little Mr. Alexander's instinct of self-preservation was as strong now as ever it had been in the dangers and risks of a gold-miner's claims and work.

"Come with me to the register and see if our entire party is here. No one will see you, if you walk in front of me, you know," advised Mr. Dalken.

That seemed to calm Mr. Alexander's perturbed mind, and he managed to keep well out of sight of his wife as he walked over to the desk. The register showed the names of all the members of the New York party, plus the names of Dodo and her mother, plus a name which filled

the whole line—"Honorable Algernon Alfred Alveston, London, England."

"Huh!" jeered Mr. Alexander. "Now he's takin' to callin' himself an honorable! Wonder if he really comes from London, England, or London, Connecticut?"

Mr. Dalken laughed at the sarcastic look in his friend's eyes, and he added: "There's a London in Canada, too, you know."

"Yeh, I s'pose so!" muttered Mr. Alexander. "Mebbe, afore I get through with A. A. A. he'll be fixin' to run away to London, Canada!"

"My dear friend, don't waste your ire on him," advised Mr. Dalken. "He's perfectly harmless, and he keeps your wife engaged in pleasant entertainments. Remember, that allows you more freedom to seek after your own interests."

"Well, I ain't so sure about his bein' harmless!" retorted Mr. Alexander. "He's after Dodo, you see, and I won't stand for any monkey-shines in that direction—not even if the Missus swears A. A. A. can pay court to my gal. Dodo is more like me, and she ain't got use for no prancin' little scatter-brain like him."

Having aired his grievance, Mr. Alexander felt better, and Mr. Dalken had no difficulty in per-

suading him to use the stairway discovered in the corridor outside the smoking room. Thus they would not need to cross the lobby, where Mrs. Alexander and Algy might see any one who came in or went out.

Polly and her friends learned, that night, that Mr. Dalken would have to remain in Gallup for about a week, so this would give the tourists ample time in which to visit such points of interest as Zuñi, Inscription Rock (which is now a National Monument), the Mormon settlement of Ramah, and other sights. Being November, Jack learned that the famous Shalako dance of the Zuñi Indians was to be held that week. Since this is the most interesting of all the amazing Zuñi celebrations, the girls were delighted to find they would be able to see it.

Mrs. Alexander had been silenced by her fiasco at the hotel hop in Albuquerque, and its effects had made her show more friendliness towards Jack, but she still thought that he should be made to fetch and carry for Mr. Dalken's companions, so she felt no compunction in asking him to do errands for her.

This arrogance of his revered friend seemed to be contagious for Algy, and he had no hesitancy

in asking Jack to get things for him, or to go to learn what the girls wished to do that day. Naturally Jack refused to dance attendance upon the unpopular young man, and Mrs. Alexander called this "insubordination on the part of a servant."

"Why don't you complain to Mr. Dalken," asked Dodo one day, after hearing her mother complain about "that valet."

"I would, in a minute, if the man were your father's valet. Being Mr. Dalken's man-servant, however, I'm not sure whether we ought to ask favors of him," admitted Mrs. Alexander.

Dodo laughed. "Well, you might tell Dad about him, and get Dad to complain to Mr. Dalken."

"That's a fine idea, Dodo! I'll do it the minute I see your father again," declared Mrs. Alexander, a satisfied expression of retaliation settling upon her face.

Algy was seen approaching at this moment, so Dodo hastened away to tell Jack and her friends about her mother's decision. But Mrs. Alexander confided in Algy that now she had a way to make that insolent valet mind his business! Thereupon she told Algy what she purposed doing, the next

time Jack showed any inclination to balk at work or duty.

"I shall remembah this, deah Mrs. Alex., the next time I have occasion to use the fellah, and he sneers me out of countenance," added Algy, a gleam of malice flitting over his expressionless face.

The entire group of tourists were gathered in the Lounge that evening, when Jack spoke of his plans for the week they would remain in Gallup. "I made a rough sketch of Gallup and various points of interest that we ought to see. But I figured out that it would be waste of time to motor half-way across Arizona to visit the Hopi Indian Reservation, and the wonderful sights near the Grand Canyon. Those can be seen when we stop at Flagstaff, with Dalky."

Mrs. Courtney and Mr. Dalken merely nodded their heads in agreement with Jack's suggestions. But Mrs. Alexander failed to see the nods, and thought this a splendid opportunity to set Algy against Jack. Therefore she whispered eagerly to her ever-present shadow, A. A. A., and he seemed spurred to action.

"Aw, I say, Mistah Dalken, it seems rawtheh

impertinent, don'chaw know, for a meah servant to dictate to us like this," began Algy, pulling fiercely at the few lonesome white hairs upon his upper lip.

Mr. Dalken turned and glanced at Algy in surprise. He had not been informed that Jack was rigging this "darling of the gods." He heartily disapproved of A. A. A.'s standards and behavior, and now he felt slightly annoyed at what he said.

Algy thought the New York financier showed concern over the situation—a situation made impossible by having a man-servant sit in such intimate relations with his master and his master's friends. Fully convinced that he was doing the gallant deed for all the ladies who did not wish to hurt Mr. Dalken's feelings, Algy summoned courage and continued his complaint.

"Theah may be places we would like to visit, places quite incomprehensible to ordinary minds such as servants have. Theahfoh, we would awsk that the man Baxter be relieved of duties foh which he is not mentally equipped." As Algy concluded, he bowed very deferentially to Mr. Dalken.

"What the blazes is that poor dote drivin' at?" demanded Mr. Alexander, scowling at Algy, but speaking to his wife.

"S-sh! Don't interfere!" commanded his wife, sternly.

"I won't 's-s-sh' at such an insult," rebelled Mr. Alexander. "And what's more, if that Barnum's Freak wants to toddle by your side during this trip to Arizony, he's got'ta watch his step! We ain't got time ner room for him to hold up any game, lemme tell you-all, and there ain't no call fer him to have any opinions 'bout nawthin' —not even Jack Baxter!" As Mr. Alexander relieved his mind of the weight of grievance, he was surprised to hear Jack laugh outright, and he saw several of the others smiling.

"Oh, Daddy! You made the most awful break just now. You told A. A. A. he had no right to 'any opinions about nothing—not even Jack' and I'm sure Jack thinks he is a great deal more than 'nothing.' At least, Dalky thinks so, or he never would have brought him west as his valet," explained Dodo, laughingly.

Mr. Alexander frowned at his evident error, but he added: "It's enough to make a man talk ten ways to onct! Having such trouble tag on at

his heels!" But he failed to designate the particular "trouble," though he glared at Algy in a way that said: "You are the cause of all the misunderstanding."

Meanwhile Jack had hurried to Mr. Dalken's side and was explaining something in a low whisper. Mr. Dalken seemed to receive light on a problem, and then he shook his head disapprovingly, even though he had to smile as he disapproved. Jack took a chair nearby, and, as soon as Mr. Alexander had stopped speaking, he cleared his throat and resumed.

"My master says that I am to continue the plans, since I have them prepared. So, awsking A. A. A.'s pawdon for my offensive self, I will say this much:

"One trip we ought to take is the one which goes to St. Michael's Mission, and from there on to Canyon de Chelly and Canyon del Muerto, by way of Fort Defiance, in Arizona. If we had enough time we also ought to tour onward from Chinlee, to Monument Valley and the marvelous sights in the northern section of the State. Those points of interest which may be approached from the Flagstaff tour can be visited later, when we start for the Grand Canyon trip.

"Another trip we ought to take, starting from Gallup, is the trail due north to the Ute Indian Reservation, and the Mesa Verde Park. These trips will use up seven or eight days' time, and Dalky figures he will be through here in that time. Therefore, in order to take in the visits to the Painted Desert near Adamana, and the Petrified Forest, just across the borderline of Arizona, we might motor from Gallup, as we turn our backs upon New Mexico, and continue on our way to Flagstaff in automobiles, instead of on train. That will give us ample opportunity to see the wonderful sights along the route, and we can remain as long as we choose at each place. After reaching Flagstaff, the cars can be sent back to Gallup. Now, what do you say to these plans?"

As Jack finished his plans, he glanced hopefully around at his friends to receive their delighted thanks and approval for his arduous sketch. Instead of hearing words of commendation, such as he had expected from the girls and Mrs. Courtney, he heard Mrs. Alexander's voice.

"No one seems to notice the insult to a lady—of course, my husband does not count, since he never took lessons in social deportment and modern etiquette, so his words spoken a short time

ago bear no weight with me;—but I refer to insults to ladies by allowing men-servants in friendly intercourse with their betters. I have tried to stand this degrading intimacy with a common valet, and I must say that, if the young man is going to run this trip, I shall leave the party!"

Mrs. Alexander stood up during the delivery of this frigid speech, and, having had her say, stared at Mr. Dalken, whose eyes seemed riveted upon the floor, and his tongue likewise riveted to silence. Then she shifted her glance to Mrs. Courtney, who seemed eager to have Mr. Dalken explain matters. Then her eyes wandered on to the three girls who were stifling their laughter with handkerchiefs. This was too much for the complainant.

"Very well! I am to understand that the fellow remains at his post as major domo, so I am to leave the party. But I will add that my daughter and Mr. Alveston, as well as my husband, Mr. Alexander, leaves with me. Come, Dodo, follow me and pack your trunks." And Mrs. Alexander beckoned her child to obey.

"Don't try any funny stunts like this, Maggie!" commanded Mr. Alexander, getting up from his chair and placing a restraining hand upon Dodo's

shoulder. "I'm cashier of this outing, remember, and I ain't got no patience with your fol-de-rols. It's bad enough to have to foot the bills for your escort, but I figger he comes cheaper, at that, than a maid would cost me. So let him stick to the job, if he likes. About traipsin' away with Dodo and me, howsomever—that's a horse of another color, and it's a color I don't take to. If A. A. A. wants to run away, we'll shake a by-by at him and wish him a safe journey back home—wherever he started from. But you stay right with me—understand!"

"Why, Ebeneezer Alexander! Do you think, for one little minute, that I'm going to be ordered about by you?" demanded the irate lady, flushing as red as a peony, with pent-up fury. "I just reckon not! I'll go now, if only to show you that you can't make me do as you say. I've got enough money left from my Colorado Springs trip to take me as far from you as I can get. Then dear Algy will see that I go further." She was so excited that she failed to understand that she had made a laughable remark about the end of her proposed journey.

Algy now arose gallantly to the demand upon his chivalry. "I certainly will escort yuah theah,

deah lady," mumbled he, tugging at his infantile mustache.

Mr. Alexander threw back his head and laughed loudly. "Well, mebbe it's just as well that you two git out. You never was invited, remember, and my good friends never said a word about your gettin' on their nerves, but I can appreciate how broken down their feelin's must be by this time. We-all kin get a rest, now. And mebbe Algy will see to it that you two travel all the way to Reno!"

"Father!" came from Dodo, in shocked tones.

"Don't worry, Dodo. They won't take the hint, but I shall have to, if your Ma sails off in company with that poor stick."

Mrs. Alexander had reached the door by this time, and she merely turned to give her liege lord a scathing look. Then she vanished behind the portières. Algy toddled at her heels.

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Courtney, in deep distress, "when Jack begged me to pretend he was a valet, I never dreamed the joke would assume these dreadful phases. Now it is time it was stopped, Mr. Dalken."

"I told Jack this evening, when he explained what had been the impression given to Mrs. Alex-

ander and her young friend, that I disapproved of the entire plot. Now it is up to him to get us out of the unpleasant scrape," replied Mr. Dalken, seriously.

"What's all this?" demanded Mr. Alexander, wonderingly.

Dodo now began to explain to her father how the mistake of Jack being a servant had started, and how it had been received by Algy. She spared her father the story of how her mother danced with Algy at the hop, in the hotel at Albuquerque, because he seemed annoyed enough at the fact that a member of his democratic family would spurn a young man for no other cause than that he was earning his living.

"I say, it serves that white-haired dude right —to let him show what's in him, by the way he acts now. But Jack won't have to play valet longer, with Algy out of the way," explained Mr. Alexander.

Mrs. Courtney did not agree with the little man, and she lost no time in saying what she thought. "It is not fair to Mrs. Alexander to play the joke any longer. Dodo must appreciate that her mother is her natural guardian and as such must be honored and obeyed. We must try

to explain away the differences between us all, and introduce harmony for the remainder of the tour."

Mr. Dalken showed his appreciation of these words, by the glance of admiration he sent Mrs. Courtney; but the glance was not seen by Polly or Eleanor, because they were too concerned about their "fun."

"We-e-ll," came slowly from Mr. Alexander's lips, "you ought to know what's right, Mrs. Courtney; but I must say, my Missus ain't so much a guardian and protector of her child like-as-how you seem to say. Little Dodo's got me to advise her, and to see that she don't make mistakes in choosin' the wrong husband—but the Missus would have her gal marry any dumb-bell, as long as he had a title er money. Ain't it so, friends? I appeal to you: how about the Urope tower, when Dodo and me had to elope to get out of marryin' that Osgood dude, eh?"

Mrs. Courtney had heard of this unique elopement of Dodo with her Dad, and she could not help smiling at the remembrance. Still she felt that certain respects were due Mrs. Alexander, in spite of that lady's foolishness and ignorant chase for society honors, and she said so now.

Mr. Dalken upheld her verdict, and then he turned to Jack.

"Well, seeing how eager you were to keep on acting as my valet, we will make use of you as one. It is part of your duty to me. I will write a letter of explanation to Mrs. Alexander, and tell her of your engagement to serve me during this trip—that you were to escort the girls and their chaperon to different places on this Southwest tour, thus affording me all the leisure I would require to attend to my business appointments. I will confess that you have other resources to live upon than the salary I pay you; then I will admit that the salary is merely nominal, since you were eager to take this journey with us. If that doesn't fetch the lady to her senses, then I shall have to try and discover other means. Now, you all keep quiet while I write. Then we will order Jack to deliver the letter at Mrs. Alexander's door in person."

Since Mr. Dalken was Big Chief of the party, there could be no objections to his plan, and soon he was seated at a writing-table. He wrote quickly for some time, then read aloud what he had written. He blotted the sheet, and folded it carefully, then placed it in an envelope and wrote

the name and room number on the outside. Then he handed this note to Jack with orders to deliver it at once.

"We shall await your return, Jack," said Mrs. Courtney, settling herself in a comfortable position to wait.

Jack looked slightly inclined to rebel against his orders, but Mr. Dalken had turned away towards the fire-place, and the young ex-valet sauntered out of the room. The girls watched with a grin of sympathy upon their faces, but not a word was spoken by any one present. Mr. Alexander, as though defying his wife's strict commands, pulled the old black pipe from his pocket and loaded it with Cut Plug. Then he struck a match on his trousers leg, and lit the tobacco. In another minute he was smoking away like a clogged chimney.

Jack was absent more than the specified ten minutes allowed by his friends, but when he did come back he was laughing to himself.

"Oh! do tell us all about it!" exclaimed the girls, eagerly.

"No, siree! I had to take that bitter dose without the sugar you girls might have given me, and now I have no intentions of sharing the

sweets that I earned. But you may find out all about it, some day. Suffice it for me to say: the awful scandal which threatened the sweet accord of the Alexander couple has been avoided by my diplomacy. Henceforth Mr. Alexander and his daughter Dodo will be made supremely happy by having Mrs. Alexander dote upon them, as all turtle-doves should." Jack laughed.

"Jack! You are rude!" reprimanded Mr. Dalken, frowning.

"I'll say he's gone queer in the head," added Mr. Alexander, knocking the ashes from his pet pipe, and getting up to leave the room. "If he figgers any one's goin' to watch me romancin' again, after the experence I had fer nigh thirty years, it shows he's gone luny. Rather than live up to his idee, I'll quit the works—so I will!"

As the little man rushed away, Mr. Dalken jumped up and ran after him. It must have taken a deal of explanation and assurance from the leader of the party to Mr. Alexander, to calm his fears and make him feel that he was not in any immediate danger of having his wife daily make love to him.

CHAPTER VIII

MR. ALEXANDER'S RUSE

THE following morning Algy failed to appear in time to join the tourists. Mr. Dalken and Mr. Alexander wished them all a good time, and then hurried away to the business meeting. Mrs. Alexander had ordered her breakfast served in her room, but she sent word to Jack that she would be down in time to start with the others on the auto trip.

Finally, having waited half an hour longer than the time appointed for starting, Jack sent a bell-boy up to the room occupied by Algy, and Dodo went to telephone her mother to hurry, if she wished to accompany them.

Dodo came back to her friends with an impatient expression upon her face.

"Ma says she will be down in just *one* little moment. That means another half-hour to wait! May as well sit down and take life easy, Jack," remarked she.

"It does seem a shame that we have to lose a

whole hour of this wonderful day, and then have to rush over the sight-seeing after we are there," declared Eleanor, angrily.

At this moment the bell-hop returned to the waiting group with his astounding information. Word was brought Jack that Mr. A. A. Alveston had checked out that morning, leaving no word of explanation. Then he turned and went away again.

"Why! Of all things!" exclaimed Polly, astonished at what she heard.

"There must be some mistake. I can't picture Algy having enough gumption to do such a thing without some one to coach him in it." So saying, Jack hurried to the clerk to find out if the message was correct.

"Yes, Mr. Baxter," replied the clerk, politely. "I was just coming on for my morning duty when the young man paid his bill and left orders with the porter for the forwarding of the trunks."

"Trunks! He only had one, I thought," gasped Jack.

"I'll call the porter and you can speak to him," said the man.

The head porter was called and Jack learned from him that four trunks were removed and ex-

pressed to Williams. Jack felt perplexed, but he concluded that it was a fortunate day for his friends when silly A. A. A. had sense enough to realize that he was not a very welcome addition to the Dalken party. Then he hurried back to tell his companions of the strange move made by Algy.

"Don't let's waste time wondering why he did it, but let us enjoy the respite he is giving us. It will be dreadful to find him awaiting us at Williams as he is sure to do, because he hasn't pep enough to plan any journey for himself. I will wager anything that Ma is the cause of this sudden move of his, and she can explain how he managed to get away so early without saying good-morning to us," said Dodo.

At this moment Mrs. Alexander was seen approaching the group. She was smiling too genially for one who had nothing to hide, and long before she joined the watching circle of friends, she began to apologize for her tardiness.

"You see, it is so difficult to dress without the help of a maid. I am unaccustomed to doing my hair and hooking my gown. And, of course, Dodo *never* thinks of me, in these little acts of kindness."

"Don't spoil the day's outing by explanations," retorted Dodo, impatiently. "It's bad enough for you to have held up the entire crowd for an hour."

Jack started for the door, and the others now followed him, but it was plainly seen that Mrs. Alexander's coming had failed to add joy or peace to the party.

Mrs. Courtney now spoke to the lady. "We heard, to our amazement, that Mr. Alveston has gone. He evidently plans to remain at Williams for some time, since he had his trunks sent there."

"Is that so! Well, we need not weep over that," returned Mrs. Alexander, pleasantly. "Algy is a dear boy, but he *does* get on one's nerves at times, doesn't he?"

"I really cannot judge, since I paid so little attention to him, you know," replied Mrs. Courtney, just as sweetly as her companion had spoken. "He seemed to be always attending you, and I was engaged in attending the girls, you see."

"Yes, that's so! Algy must have felt himself out of the group of young folks. He was quite important a personage at the Springs, however, and Dodo was the envied one of all the girls there. How different it must have seemed to him

—to be secondary in your party," said Mrs. Alexander.

Mrs. Courtney remained silent after this, because she detested hypocrisy and preferred silence to such empty conversation. So the two ladies took their seats in the car without further explanations.

While Jack was advising the driver about the trip, Dodo turned to her mother and spoke.

"What under the sun made you send A. A. A. on with the trunks?"

"My *dear!* As if I was responsible for his leaving you!" the lady sighed, as though the accusation was too much for her to bear.

"Well, never mind, Ma! We're all thankful you did it, because it would have been too distressing to have him slide down one of the high cliffs we will visit, or get mixed up in an Indian brawl, or lose himself as usual, when we go to inspect queer caves and ancient canyons," laughed Dodo.

Mrs. Alexander seemed mollified at this, and subsided with a fixed smile upon her lips. A smile that seemed to say sorrowfully: "I'll be pleasant no matter what you do or say to me, since I am a martyr, anyway."

The young people soon forgot Algy, and Mrs. Alexander exerted herself to be agreeable to Jack, hence the trip proved to be very enjoyable to all.

The week passed quickly with so much sightseeing, and the genial company that agreed pleasantly upon every suggestion Jack made for them. Then Mr. Dalken and Mr. Alexander concluded their conferences at Gallup, and, in company with Mr. Fuzzier, informed Jack that they were ready to leave. Jack then arranged with a man who owned several fine cars to drive the entire party to Adamana, which was the nearest stop to the Painted Desert, just north of the town, and the Petrified Forest to the south of it. It had been decided to visit the Painted Desert first, and then drive through the Petrified Forest the next day, and come out near Holbrook, where the entire party could spend the night. In the morning the three business men would continue to Ash Fork where they were to remain for a week, to consult privately with several prominent men. The party under Jack's supervision would motor to the Hopi Indian Reservation, where the wonderful Keams Canyon and the remarkable Hopi Mesas were to be found. Going southerly from Polacca, he wished his friends to visit the Giant's Chain, and

then follow the autoroad from Oraibi to the Painted Desert of the Little Colorado. Thence he would turn off this road and follow the one which led to Canyon Diablo. Here they would stop long enough to see all the points of interest, and then motor on to Flagstaff.

This route was followed, and a week later the two cars ran into Flagstaff. The passengers and their luggage were soon waiting in the hotel while Jack paid off the drivers of the automobiles and sent them back to Gallup. To the delight of the three girls, Mr. Dalken and his two companions met them as they entered the hotel. This meant that Dalky would be with them when they visited the Cliff Dwellings just south of Cliffs, a wonder-spot which they had seen in the distance when motoring past.

Soon after the party had gone to their individual rooms to brush away the dust and dirt of touring in a wind which carried the desert dust upon its wings, Jack's room-telephone rang. He answered it at once, and heard his guardian's voice.

"Jacky, old boy, what do you plan to do the rest of the day?"

"I paid off the chauffeurs and sent them back to Gallup, because I learned how much cheaper

are the cars in Flagstaff. But I have not hired any; I wanted to hear from you first," returned Jack.

"Can you come down—or shall I come up?" asked Mr. Dalken.

"I'll run down—I was about to leave my room, anyway," said Jack; then he hung up the receiver and left the room.

A few minutes later he met Mr. Dalken, and sat down beside him to plan for the week.

"I suppose you all expect me to go about with you to visit the side-shows of Flagstaff, eh, Jack?" asked Mr. Dalken.

"Why, yes," returned Jack. "The girls were awfully glad to find that you were here and would be at liberty to stick to the bunch."

"Well, that is what I had planned to do, my boy, but we—that is, Alex., Fuzzy and myself—find we can drive with you as far as Montezumas Castle, but we will have to leave you there, while we go on to inspect a stretch of land now for sale. It is not generally known to be for sale and Alex. says we must get an option on it before the United Copper Company gets wind of the thing. We just heard of this last night—Fuzz got a code

wire from Chicago, and you understand that we have to work fast, eh?"

Mr. Dalken seemed anxious, as he confided this news to Jack, and the young man understood how important it was that his guardian should be excused from joining the tourists.

"Why, Dalky, every one of us will give up our outings if, by doing so, we might help you in this work you are developing. Just you go on exactly as though you were here alone with Fuzzy and Mr. Alex., and never waste a thought upon us. In fact, I have done nobly, thus far, with A. A. A. out of the way. Ask Mrs. Courtney if you doubt that I made a fine guide."

"Oh, that reminds me!" exclaimed Mr. Dalken, laughingly. "I saw Algy—but I will wait and tell the crowd about it later."

Mr. Fuzzier strolled up at this moment, and Jack got up to shake hands with him. Then the newcomer spoke to Mr. Dalken.

"I've been doing a little private detective work, Dalken, and I find that a stranger who reminds me of one of the directors of the Copper Company is staying at this hotel for a few days. Now, how in the name of conscience are we to get away

without their suspecting our intentions? Lucky we took Alex.'s advice and registered under assumed names."

Mr. Dalken turned to Jack and said: "You know what I told you just now? Well, the girls —and Mrs. Alexander particularly—must be warned not to greet me as a returned wanderer from Ash Forks. If any one lurking about finds out how Fuzzy, Alex. and I have been scouting around the country in quest of capitalists to subscribe for our new company's stock, the whole plan of opening the tract Alexander discovered may go up the flue. On the other hand, it seems providential that we all arrived about the same time, since it will seem plausible that we are on a tour of the Grand Canyon and nearby points of interest. I will leave it to you, Jack, to tell every one in our party that secrecy about my movements, since I left New York, is imperative if they wish to help me succeed. This afternoon at—say—two, we will get in the cars and start to visit Montezumas Castle, you returning here tonight. But, silence, Jack, upon the confidential plan I told you—about our going on from the Castle, and sending you and the ladies back alone —understand?"

"Sure! I'll skidoo upstairs now, Dalky, and warn the three girls and Mrs. Courtney about it."

"Exactly! And I'll send Alex. up to his wife to put her on guard about giving things away to strangers—her usual failing," added Mr. Dalken.

Then before another word was said, Jack hurried away, and the two men hastened to the smoking-room to tell their third partner to go find his wife, and impress upon her the necessity of keeping mum about the actions and business meetings of her husband and his partners.

Mr. Alexander smiled cynically as he listened to his friends' advice; then he replied: "Like-es not, Maggie'll fly off the handle and shout all she knows from the housetops, just to badger me into agreein' to let that perky dude marry Dodo!"

"Oh, good gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Dalken. "The whole continent of South America isn't worth that dreadful mistake."

"Don't you worry, friends," explained the little man, smiling as an idea entered his tremendous brain. "I'll fix things so's Maggie will be feeding out of my hand for a few days, and by that time there won't be no risks of losin' that property."

As it was none of Mr. Dalken's business what his friend said or did in his private family circle,

he did not ask Mr. Alexander how he planned to keep his wife from publishing the news of her husband's close association with a man who added prestige to her social position. As this news would tell others that three financiers were affiliated in a way that might bode ill to competitive financiers, it would be as well to suppress the publisher before she could broadcast her tidings.

Mr. Alexander hurried away to reach his wife's room before she could confide in the chambermaid, or come down to the lounge to see if she might find any one of importance to whom she might introduce herself, as was her usual custom when left alone.

In the sanctity (?) of their private room, Mr. Alexander began to approach his subject in a round-about manner.

"Well, Marguerite, glad to see you lookin' so good. This bracin' air sure does agree with your complexion and tone. A few more weeks of the same tonic will take twenty years more off your face."

Mrs. Alexander had just been examining her face and color in the mirror, and she felt worried over a small wrinkle which she thought she detected at the corner of her eyes. In spite of all

the wrinkle plasters she used nightly, this fine line crept in unawares, it seems. But her husband's surprising compliment—so unusual from him—pleased her mightily.

"Do you really think so, Ebeneezer? I was just thinking how worn and aged I had grown since I started on this tiresome tour."

"Not a bit! Not a bit, Marguerite! I'm the only one that looks worn and aged. If we-all didn't know better, you and Dodo could pass for sisters, all right. I wonder you never thought of lettin' her go visitin' for a season, or so, just to see if folks at home would credit you with havin' such a grown-up gal," continued the wily little man.

"It does seem too bad, doesn't it, that Dodo really advertises my age to the public. I know I look very young to have such a big girl, but I try to have society people understand that she *looks* much older than she is. Still, I don't know but you are right." Mrs. Alexander mused silently over her husband's remark, after she had had her say. Mr. Alexander watched quietly and waited for her to make the next move in this game.

"I'll have to try your plan out, when we get back to some fashionable place in the East, Eben-

eezer," finally said Mrs. Alexander. "Every one in your party knows me here, and even Algy would laugh if he heard I was trying to play a joke on the public by passing as Dodo's sister instead of her mother."

"I'll tell you what you might do, Marguerite, —just to try and get your hand into the game before we-all reach Grand Canyon, which is a fearful high-toned place, you know. That El Tovar Hotel is one of the swellest houses in the country, and folks dress to beat the band. Now, I'll strike a bargain with you, dearie, if you want to have some fun by posing as a young lady, heartfree and ready for a beau, eh?"

Mr. Alexander's interested smile and his good-natured offer would have hoodwinked a wiser person than his wife. Being so willing a victim to blandishments, Mrs. Alexander was ready for the proposition instantly.

"What bargain do you want to make. I'll agree to anything that doesn't annoy me," returned she, eagerly.

"Why, it's this. That you don't let on Dodo and me are your husband and daughter until after we leave Arizony. I'll make believe that Dodo's and my name is Ammerman—see. You hang on

to Alexander, and pose as a flapper, if you like, with Dodo and the other gals your chums. Then I'll put Dalken wise, to play up as amateur sweetheart, and Fuzzy must be your steady company. That makes a fine little comedy, I say, and we'll see if folks swallow the bait. I'm sure Dalken and Fuzzier will enjoy the joke as much as you will. The girls are always out for a lark, and that leaves Jack and Mrs. Courtney to fix. But, then, Jack will see the fun to be had out of the play, and Mrs. Courtney doesn't count any in this plan."

"Oh, Ebeneezer!" cried Mrs. Alexander delightedly clapping her beringed hands. "It would be too funny for anything! I can just see myself with two admiring lovers following around after me. If you think the others will see what a joke it will be, I'll play the star part until we leave Grand Canyon. What a lot of romantic tête-à-têtes we can have in that lovely resort!"

Her husband grunted silently to himself. But he could not afford to lose, now that he had won thus far, so he hid his disgust at his wife's social aspirations and her yearning for a vanished youth, and he now made known what she must do for him to clinch the bargain.

"You must act the part of a modest, retiring young lady, Mag—Marguerite, and keep close to Mrs. Courtney, since she is the chaperon, you see. Don't flirt with other men, but make believe you have your hands full of trouble with keeping off the two elderly beaux. I'll put Dalken wise to the play, but Fuzzier is half in love with you already, I see. He's not any too particular about loving another man's wife, I fear, so he'll be glad of a chance to make up to you. Now, then, for my promise to keep Dodo and myself out of your way, and let you make believe you are Miss Alexander, of New York, or London, or some other big town: you've got to keep secret that you ever knew a miner by your name; or that Dalken is a widower, once removed, with his chum, Fuzzier, out here on business. To play the game right, Dalken and Fuzzier ought to take new names, too. Fine fix it would be, if some one, knowing of Dalken's fame as a New York millionaire, read his name in the hotel register, and then reported to all the newspapers how he was mad over you! The same about Fuzzier—only he's famous in Chicago. Now, I won't stand for any such newspaper notoriety, understand? If you want to try out your hand at acting a part, it's got to be

done proper, and then I'll stake my money on you, old gal!"

"Oh! If that is all," laughed his wife, in relief, "I can promise that at once. It doesn't make a bit of difference whether the two men change their names, or what they do, as long as we go on with the fun. Then we shall see whether folks really think me as young as my friends tell me I look."

"Better begin right here, Mag—Marguerite! I'll go and coach your beaux how you are *Miss* Alexander, and we ain't no family of yours. Then I'll see the girls and teach 'em their parts, too. You dress the part, and when we start off for Montezumas Castle, you'll have things your own way, see?"

"Yes, yes! Hurry away and do as you say. I've got to find a youngish dress in my baggage. What a pity I shipped my trunks on to Williams. I had lots of Dodo's fine clothes in them, and they're just what I need for this joke."

"Why not have Dodo loan you one of her suits for to-day? I will send her here to find out what you want. A few days from now, and you will have your trunks sent on to Grand Canyon, you know," advised her husband, pleasantly.

"That's a good idea. Run on, and tell Dodo to come to me at once. But don't you go and ruin all the fun by calling me by my first name, as though you knew me intimately!" warned his wife.

"No danger!" laughed Mr. Alexander, as he skipped out of the door and closed it carefully behind him. Then he shook with mirth as he remembered how he had slandered the Chicago bachelor, Fuzzier, and how scandalized Dalken would be to find he was Mrs. Alexander's lover.

The little plotter hurried to Dodo's room to tell her the news, and she laughed with her father at his description of Mr. Fuzzier being a flirt, and having intentions to fall in love with Mrs. Alexander. But Dodo became serious, when she understood the reason for keeping her mother so interested in Mr. Dalken and Mr. Fuzzier.

"You'd better run and prepare Dalky and his friend, Daddy, or they'll escape. Don't shock them suddenly, but do it by degrees, if you want them to survive," laughed Dodo.

CHAPTER IX

SURPRISES ALL AROUND

MR. ALEXANDER might have spared his friends the disagreeable part of playing sweethearts to his wife, because the man who had been at the hotel when the Dalken party arrived, left there that same day, without having discovered that the supposed competitors for the envied tract of land south of Montezumas Castle were right at hand. But it was not so simple a matter to dispose of Mrs. Alexander's yearnings to pretend to be a youthful magnet once more. Having received such an unusual suggestion from her practical, unromantic husband, she took full advantage of it—much to Mrs. Courtney's disgust and certain pangs of jealousy. Thus the first surprise came to the three men who had been plotting to evade the man they thought was in Flagstaff for a secret purpose. Had they know that this same man was then on his way to Williams, where he had heard the New York and Chicago financiers were to be,

what might have been their fears—knowing that Algy was lounging about that small town, waiting for Mrs. Alexander to give him the next cue?

While Mr. Alexander stood grinning at his two associates, after having confided to them the plan he had evolved to protect their interests, Jack crossed the room to join them. He saw the expressions of fierce rebellion upon the faces of Mr. Fuzzier and Mr. Dalken, but he had no key to the situation then.

"Say, Dalky, it's pretty late to start for the Castle now, because there is no comfortable place where we could spend the night, you see?" asked Jack.

"I don't care where we go—Alex. has made such a mess of things," growled Mr. Dalken.

Mr. Alexander chuckled aloud, then turned to Jack and told of his wonderful plan to throw dust in the eyes of the supposed Director of the Copper Company. Jack laughed heartily, when he heard that his guardian and Mr. Fuzzier were expected to play the roles of romantic beaux.

Just at this moment Polly came down the stairs, and, seeing the men standing as though waiting for their friends, she hastened to join them.

"I left Nolla and Dodo with Mrs. Alexander,

who is unusually anxious to make a good impression upon the gentlemen of our group," explained Polly, with an amused laugh at Mr. Dalken.

"Humph!" came from that disgruntled individual.

Then Jack spoke to Polly. "I was just telling Dalky that it was too late to start for the Cliff Dwellings to-day. We ought to get up early in the morning and have a full day in which to properly see the Castle."

"Yes, but I thought the main object in this trip was to help Dalky and the other two men to get out of the way of their competitor for that tract of land? If that is so, we'd better lose no more time, because I saw that man start off in an automobile just as I was about to leave my room, before coming down here," explained Polly.

"By Jingo! Then we'd better be off!" exclaimed Mr. Fuzzier.

"I should say so!" added Mr. Dalken, turning to catch hold of Jack's arm. "You run out and see if we can start in a car at once—Mr. Alexander, Fuzzy and myself. Hustle a good driver into the seat, and tell him not to wait for anything."

Without waiting to hear more Jack hurried

away to do his guardian's bidding, and Polly was left to answer the anxious questions of the three men. All she could add to her information, however, was of no consequence to the three speculators.

"Polly, we'll leave you to explain to the others why we had to rush away without waiting to say good-by," said Mr. Dalken, taking Mr. Fuzzier's arm, to make him come with him.

"What about our luggage, Dalken?" asked Mr. Alexander, not so anxious to go away in this fashion.

"Oh! Jack will attend to that. The bags can be taken on to the Grand Canyon, where we will meet the ladies."

Thus, before the rejuvenated mother of Dodo could appear to captivate her two promised admirers, they had vanished from Flagstaff. Jack saw them off, and then turned to laugh at the whole plot.

"If we could get rid of Mrs. Alexander as easily as she rid herself of A. A. A., there might be hopes of enjoying ourselves during the next few days. But she will be in a dreadful mood when she learns how her beaux have disappeared."

Polly laughed, too, because she could picture the consternation of Dodo's mother. It would be difficult to make her believe the truth about the sudden departure of the men, and little Mr. Alexander would have to bear the brunt of her anger in the long run.

Soon after the automobile carrying the three financiers had rolled away, Mrs. Alexander "in all her conquering glory" came into the room where Polly and Jack were wondering how she would receive the news. She certainly meant business—if one might judge of her intentions by her costume and make-up. Eleanor and Dodo wisely remained out of sight of their companions; there would have been a unanimous scream of laughter, had they met each other's eyes.

"Well, dearies, here I am, ready to start, when you say the word," began Mrs. Alexander, but she looked around quickly for signs of her promised suitors.

"All right, Mrs. Alex.," replied Jack suavely, "we are all ready, too. Come, girls! The car is outside."

Jack and Polly led the way, and in a short time all were in the automobile, and the chauffeur was given the word to start.

"But, wait! Where are the gentlemen?" cried Mrs. Alexander.

"Oh! they will not be with us on this short outing. We are going to drive to the Lowell Observatory this afternoon, and postpone the trip to Montezumas Castle for to-morrow. You see, such an outing will need the most of an entire day, if it is to be enjoyable" explained Jack, nonchalantly.

"All the same, I don't see why they couldn't have come with us," complained the lady, sulkily.

Eleanor and Dodo had not heard of the unexpected departure of the three men, and they were not in the surprise which Polly and Jack would have to spring upon them later. So they all drove to see the famous observatory where investigations of the planet Mars were made. Late that afternoon they returned to the hotel, Jack wondering how he should tell Mrs. Alexander that her beaux had fled.

Flagstaff, being a popular summer vacation place, was, at this time of year, quiet and settled for the winter's rest. Consequently the tourists might be said to have taken possession of the hotel, since so few visitors stopped there during the cold season.

Upon arriving at the hotel Mrs. Alexander looked eagerly around for her husband and his two friends, and Jack seized this opportunity to inform the dismayed lady of the necessity of their hurried trip.

"Well! Any man that would consider a paltry strip of western land in preference to a *lady* isn't worth wasting my time. Let Ebeneezer run them off, as I'm sure he did in order to annoy me, but I'll find other company, just as good as those two old men!" threatened Mrs. Alexander, angrily.

Having delivered herself of this ultimatum Dodo's youthfully dressed mother turned haughtily away and went up to her room. The other members in the group were too tired to bother about changing their motor clothes for the evening, and they decided to have supper, dressed as they were, and then retire in order to be up early in the morning for the trip to the Castle cliffs.

Dodo telephoned to her mother's room to tell her they were waiting for her to join them in the dining-room, but Mrs. Alexander said she was having her supper sent to her room. Therefore the young people and Mrs. Courtney thought no more of the matter, and enjoyed the hot meal

while wondering what the three absent men were doing.

Upon bidding each other good-night, later in the evening, Jack reminded all that the car would be ready at eight the following morning.

"We'll be ready, too, never fear," returned Mrs. Courtney.

And so they were; but Mrs. Alexander sent word by Dodo that she had had enough of gazing at blank walls and pretending to go into raptures over a gaping hole!

"Just like Ma," added Dodo, having given the message to Jack. "If that hole, or the wall, was noted for the visits paid by some personages of fame, she'd camp on the spot in order to say she'd been one of a party where the princess, or a governor, or some other big gun was the feature." Dodo's disgusted tone and expression told plainly that she did not favor such pretensions.

"Well, it's too bad we have to leave Mrs. Alexander alone all day, but she prefers it to going to the cliffs," sighed Mrs. Courtney, starting for the automobile.

"Don't worry about Ma. She'll console herself with a yellow novel," said Dodo.

Mrs. Courtney did not approve of the manner in which Dodo spoke of her mother, and she wished the girl would use more consideration in speaking so disrespectfully of her before Polly and Eleanor, but she felt that she had no right to advise or correct another woman's daughter. And Polly and Eleanor, knowing that Dodo spoke truly about her mother's weaknesses, kept silent on what they thought to be rather blunt statements.

That day was spent in seeing the National Monument of cliffs situated on Beaver Creek, in the Verde Valley, and by sunset time they were on their way back to their hotel.

"To-morrow we will visit Humphrey's Peak," said Jack, looking at his trip-book. "I was told that we can get one of the finest views of any in the west from the top of that peak. The clerk at the hotel says it is possible, on a clear day, to see over 75,000 square miles of territory—think of that! Don't forget your kodaks, girls, because you'll want them once you get to the top of the peak."

"It seems rather risky, Jack, to try to gain the summit of that peak in this cold weather,"

remarked Mrs. Courtney. "The snows will have made the trails impassable, and the guides may have trouble in finding the way."

"Oh, well, we'll see how high we can climb without losing our way," returned Jack, indifferently.

"The auto can carry us part way up the mountain," added Polly, "and we can ride horses the rest of the way, if the day is pleasant."

"That's what I thought," explained Jack. "Carry the lunch in the car, and eat before we start for the climb to the peak. It will be easy enough to come down again, and then we will be back in the hotel by dark."

Mrs. Courtney was not so sure about it all, and she determined to inquire of the hotel proprietor, if the trip would be absolutely safe.

When the party of five went to the desk to ask for mail, they were surprised to hear that Mrs. Alexander had paid her bill and departed. All the word she left was that she would meet them at the hotel at Grand Canyon. This news annoyed Dodo, because she felt sure that her mother had stopped to get Algy at Williams, and would go on to Grand Canyon without a thought of being misunderstood by others who knew nothing

of her social aspirations. She was gone, however, and nothing more could be done about it.

Jack and his friends went to sleep that night fully convinced that Mrs. Alexander had called for Algy, and then gone on to Grand Canyon with him. And Mr. Dalken, with his two companions, anxious to forestall the Copper Company by securing options on the great tract of land south of Montezumas Castle, believed the little hoax Mr. Alexander had played upon his wife had worked successfully to keep from their competitors all facts about their launching a new company to mine the valuable ore from the Verde Valley. Perhaps it was just as well that no one knew what Mrs. Alexander was doing, and what she contemplated doing for the next few days.

After leaving the hotel at Flagstaff, Mrs. Alexander had boarded the train and went as far as Williams. Here, as Dodo had thought, she expected to find Algy and persuade him to attend her on the way to the Tovar Hotel at Grand Canyon. But she was destined to have another disagreeable surprise.

She had not telephoned nor wired Algy that she would arrive that noon, because she was so sure he would be impatiently waiting for her. To

her dismay, therefore, she found that a Mr. Dunlap had been at the hotel for a few days and had struck up a sudden friendship with young Alveston. Then Algy, dissatisfied with his lonesome life at Williams, swallowed the tempting bait held out to him by the wily promoter. When Mr. Dunlap proposed that the young man be his guest upon a little side trip to an interesting point which he was about to visit, Algy hailed the invitation as a godsend. Consequently the two started off in a luxurious limousine at about the same time that Jack and his party left the hotel at Flagstaff for Montezumas Castle.

Because of this acceptance of the invitation, Algy was not to be found when Mrs. Alexander arrived. The man who owned the hotel at Williams, where Algy had stopped, knew only that the trunks had been sent on to Grand Canyon, and that the young man had driven away in another man's car.

"I'm sure they went on to Grand Canyon, so I'll take the next train from here. What time will I get there?" said Mrs. Alexander, having to hide her annoyance, since no one was present upon whom she dared vent her anger.

"You'll have to wait around here for several

hours, Ma'am, as there will be no train until four this afternoon. You'll get to Grand Canyon in time for supper," explained the man, politely.

"Dear me! And there's nothing for me to do here, is there?" she exclaimed, impatiently.

"Well, that depends on what you like to do. Now, we-all find so much to do, every day, that the days are too short for us," laughed the man.

"I suppose everybody—that is every one worth while, goes right through to Grand Canyon, so Williams never sees society people," remarked Mrs. Alexander, with a superior air, calculated to impress this mere nobody of a man.

"Sometimes society persons find themselves stranded here," chuckled the man, who cared naught for this lady's hoity-toity manners. "There happens to be such a man, right this minute—just as mad at being delayed in his plans, as you can be. He's said to be some punkins back in Chicago, where he's a big lawyer."

"Oh, really! Who is he?" asked Mrs. Alexander, finding life might be bearable in Williams.

"Why, he's the Executor of the White Ranch, down Verde Valley way. He is said to reckon his income with seven figures to the left of the decimal!"

"I do not think I am acquainted with him, though I have met so many millionaires lately that he may be one of them," mused Mrs. Alexander, seeming to be trying to recollect.

"Reckon you haven't met this one," continued her informer. "He only left the ranch yesterday, and must have expected to meet some arrivals in this town to-day. They didn't arrive, and now he's got to stay over and do some waiting, I'm told. If you happened to know him, it would help kill time for you."

"That would be very pleasant for me, but he is not around, and I'll be going on to Grand Canyon in a few hours' time."

"You must have struck a lucky day, Ma'am, for here comes Mr. Belnord—the man I was just telling you about. He's strolling across the verandah this minute, as though he wanted to kill time. He'll ask me if there is any telegrams or 'phone messages in another moment," whispered the gossipy clerk.

Mrs. Alexander knew the man to be a stranger, but she made up her mind to get acquainted with a millionaire who might be looking for a companion to wile away wearisome hours. Hence she planned quickly.

"Oh, yes! I met him in ——" exclaimed she.

Just as the frowning gentleman reached the desk to address the clerk, the lady who was standing there dropped her costly handbag. Naturally the newcomer picked it up and bowed politely as he returned it to the owner.

"Oh, thank you," said Mrs. Alexander in a demure tone. Then in a surprised way, held out a daintily gloved hand, as she exclaimed gladly: "Why! If it isn't Mr. Belnord! To think of meeting you in this out-of-the-way spot. The last time I saw you was over a year ago, at a fête in Chicago."

She acted the part of a delighted old friend to perfection, and Mr. Belnord, chagrined that he could not place so charming a lady, accepted her word for it and kept rummaging through the memory cells of his brain for a possible clue to her identity.

They shook hands like old friends, and Mrs. Alexander began to rattle off her complaints against a railroad that failed to run a train to Grand Canyon to accommodate her. Then she added naively: "My father, Mr. Alexander, and my younger sister, Dorothy, were to have met me here to-day, but I suppose they went on with Mr.

Dalken and Mr. Fuzzier to visit the cliffs of the Verde Valley. I am weary of so many side-trips, and I decided to meet them here. Do you remember my sister, Mr. Belnord?"

"No, Miss Alexander, I'm ashamed to say I do not. I remember I saw nothing but you, when you were present, remember," replied the gallant gentleman of forty years. "But Fate has been more than kind to me to-day in giving me an opportunity to amuse you while you are delayed by the wretched train service."

Mrs. Alexander managed to hold back a smile of gratification at the success of her little trick, and Mr. Belnord considered himself very clever in learning the lady's name with so little trouble. But he also caught the names of the three men he had cause to chase,—and the very three he was waiting in Williams to meet—if the estate agent, Dunlap, was to be trusted. It now behooved him to find out all he could from this talkative woman, who evidently had reached the spinster's age of garrulity.

The two walked slowly away from the desk, and sought the comfortable easy chairs in the parlor. Here Mrs. Alexander proceeded to captivate her new admirer, being wary to steer clear

of reefs whenever the conversation seemed to turn to their former friendship.

But Mr. Belnord cared naught about former or future friendships—he was anxious to learn about the present plans of certain men this lady knew, and so, before she boarded her train for Grand Canyon, where she expected to find Algy, he had found out all he needed to know for the present.

CHAPTER X

HOLD-UPS ALONG THE WAY

THE three men, Mr. Dalken, Mr. Fuzzier and Mr. Alexander, having been fortunate enough to secure an experienced driver of their car, now began to notice the scenery along the road to Montezumas Castle.

"I'm sorry we had to run away without the girls. How pleasant it would have been to hear their exclamations and delight at these wonderful cliffs," remarked Mr. Dalken.

"You-all wouldn't have had much chance to listen to the gals, because my missus would demand all your attention, onct she knew she could count on you-all fer beaux," chuckled Mr. Alexander.

"Well, then, it is our lucky day that we got away as we did," retorted the shy bachelor, Mr. Fuzzier.

"I wonder what she will do when she finds out how we escaped?" mused the lady's husband.

"Ten to one she will be after us!" laughed Mr. Dalken.

The road was not in good condition, and the three men had not examined the car before engaging it for this hard trip, therefore they were not aware that the tires were badly worn. As the road became rock and rutty, however, Mr. Dalken spoke to his companions.

"Seems to me the tires are not as hard as they might be," said he.

"The one on my side, rear, feels as though it were flat, or about to be so," added Mr. Fuzzier.

Mr. Alexander opened the door to have a backward glance at the doubtful tire. At the time he opened the door the car was just running through a mass of gravel-covered road, and the wheels flung the pebbles up with great force. One exceptionally large stone was whirled and thrown backwards as from a sling-shot. It struck Mr. Alexander square between the eyes with such velocity that he crumpled back in the automobile as though shot. The only sound he made was a grunt as he fell.

"Great Scott! What's the matter, Alex.?" cried Mr. Fuzzier, who sat on that side of the

car. But he received no reply. "Not a drop of anything on hand to revive him!" muttered Mr. Dalken, banging upon the glass in front to attract the chauffeur's attention.

The driver turned to see what was wanted of him, and at that moment the car swerved the fraction of an inch. But that fraction was quite enough to cause the wheels on one side to run into a deep rut. This hard jolt sent all three men together in a heap. Poor Mr. Alexander happened to be underneath, and Mr. Fuzzier on top. Mr. Dalken, being between both, received no hurt, but Mr. Fuzzier struck his head against the closed door, and soon a great swelling rose there and closed his left eye. Mr. Alexander, being unconscious, could not swear or complain against his tough luck of being the under one.

Mr. Dalken now lost all patience, because of fear of what had happened to his companion and with this last mishap. He discovered then, that he had not forgotten how to curse politely, and, once started, it seemed as though he would never stop. Even Mr. Fuzzier, with his head aching and throbbing like mad, and deeply concerned as he was about Mr. Alexander, had to laugh.

The chauffeur sprang from his seat and rushed

to that side of the car which was down in the rut. Instead of coming to the help of his passengers, he began to look around for a visible means of getting the wheels up out of the mire.

"You dolt! come here, won't you?" shouted Mr. Dalken.

"Got anything we could use to help restore consciousness to this man?" demanded Mr. Fuzzier, shaking a fist at the driver.

Then the chauffeur found that one of his passengers had been seriously injured, and he immediately feared they might hold him responsible, because he thought it was due to his accident in driving. He sprang upon the runningboard and peered in at the crumpled little man, with fear plainly expressed in his eyes.

"Don't stand there like a mummy!" called Mr. Dalken, "but open that door and help us lift the man out of this."

Thus admonished, the chauffeur did as he was bidden, and, in a few moments, Mr. Alexander had been taken from the car and carefully placed upon the bad road.

"I hope, sir, the gentleman hasn't broken his neck, sir!" whispered the driver, trembling in fear.

"If he hasn't, it isn't because of your careful driving!" snarled Mr. Fuzzier, the swelling beginning to rise to the size of an egg.

At this moment the man discussed sighed heavily, and in another few moments he opened his eyes and blinked dazedly at the blinding blue sky overhead. At the same time, the three men, all anxious to help their unfortunate companion, started suddenly to stoop over his prostrate form and offer assistance to him.

What must be the natural result of having two men upon opposite sides of little Mr. Alexander, unexpectedly bend far over the form between them? Mr. Dalken and the chauffeur could tell any one after that just what did happen. But the collision of the two heads seemed to do more damage to Mr. Dalken's forehead than to that of the other man. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the chauffeur was a hardened young man, while the New Yorker was soft from luxurious living. Anyway, without going into the cause, it remained plainly evident that both men, thereafter, bore the marks of the collision. The driver's head showed a great bluish lump, and Mr. Dalken's eyebrow raised up and caused an enormous swelling above the eye so that it seemed im-

possible for the skin to stand more stretching without a break.

Mr. Alexander now sat up and stared around. He saw two men glaring at each other as though they would like to strangle each other; and the third man stood with mouth open, watching the other two. He was entirely forgotten—or to be exact, he was *overlooked* in this interesting scene.

"By the Great Horned Spoon! I got'a turrible smack on the head!" exclaimed Mr. Alexander, lifting a hand to feel of the injured spot.

"You've got more than a smack there, old man," retorted Mr. Fuzzier, placing a hand under each arm and helping his friend to scramble to his feet. "You've got a lump about the size of a foot-ball, that will mar your beauty, all right!"

"But, say, Fuzzy!" gasped Mr. Alexander, in amazement, as he stared at the man addressed, "what struck you, when the gravel flew? You ain't such a prize-winner in our beauty contest, either."

That made Mr. Fuzzier roar with appreciation of the truth, and in another moment all four men were laughing as though they had just heard the funniest joke ever told.

"If we needed any disguises to-day, to keep

those competitors from recognizing us, we found them all right!" exclaimed Mr. Dalken, feeling gently of the awful lump over his eye.

"Had any one told me this yarn—of how four men got swelled heads over nothin' more'n a bit of gravel in the road, I'd say, 'come off your perch, Mr. Lawyer!' " laughed Mr. Alexander.

"If I look half as fetching as you do, Dalky," remarked Mr. Fuzzier, "I'd wear a mask. You'll frighten away the jack-rabbits, I fear."

"All right, Fuzzy. Tell the chauffeur to find us four masks—there is little choice between us, so far as looks go!" was Mr. Dalken's reply.

"If you gentlemen expeck to get to that cabin south of Sedona to-day, we'd better hoist this machine out'n the rut, and get along," advised the driver of the car.

"Hoist! What can we hoist with?" demanded Mr. Dalken.

"Reckon we got'a put our shoulders to the wheel," grinned the man. "I'll git under the wust end and jack the car, somewhat."

Mr. Alexander had recovered sufficiently from the blow of the stone to help with his hardened muscles. After much puffing and straining of the four men, the automobile was pushed and pulled

out of the ditch. Then they got in again, and the driver started the engine.

"I was remarking, not so long ago, that I wish the girls might have been with us," was Mr. Dalken's smiling remark. "Now I am thankful that only four heads were batted in this ball game. If there had been more of us, there would have been more aching heads."

"Umph!" grunted Mr. Alexander, "I might've said how my blow came as punishment for my foolin' the missus. But that wouldn't account fer your heads!"

"No, it's one of those strange freaks of nature—to have four men traveling together, and each one bearing upon their foreheads the mark of a misspent life," laughed Mr. Fuzzier.

"Why not quote Scripture, Fuzzy, and say 'the mark of the beast,' " added Mr. Dalken.

"Because I must confess that I've forgotten all that I ever knew of my Bible." Then, as an afterthought, he added: "But tell me, Dalky—how is it that you can remember so well, since your Sunday School days?"

Mr. Dalken returned the quizzical look, and replied: "I may not look it, but I will admit that I often find time to go to church, and more times

than I will tell you or the world, I find a verse or a bit of advice in the Bible that does me a lot of good. Men of Big Business can't afford to overlook the Science to be had by referring to the Holy Book."

"Well! I'll be doggoned! If you aren't the last man I ever expected to hear that from!" exclaimed Mr. Alexander.

Thereafter the subject was suddenly changed, and Mr. Fuzzier spoke of the prospects of reaching the ranch, whence they were bound, in time to take advantage of the Copper Company.

No unforeseen accidents occurred until after they passed Montezumas Castle, though the leaking tires caused many delays in order to have them pumped full of air. The road was not constructed of rose-leaves, either, and the jarring and jolting of soft tires over rocks and ruts made sore heads ache fearfully.

The unfamiliar appearances of the men with the black and blue eyes, and the unusual excrescences upon the foreheads, caused frequent roars of laughter from one or the other of the three men. And the chauffeur came in for not a little of the ridicule because of one prominent cheekbone and half-closed eye.

The road from the Cliffs, where the Castle is located, goes westerly as far as Clarkdale. Sedona, where the three speculators hoped to be before dark, was located several miles from this road, about half the distance between Clarkdale and the Cliffs.

The chauffeur, having had a painful lesson about careful driving, decided it would be wiser to halt long enough at the Cliffs to change the leaking tire, than to continue on and stop now and then to pump it full of air. This took time, but the men assisted in every way possible in order to gain time.

Once more they were traveling along the road which runs to Clarkdale, and hopes were in the ascendant that Sedona would be reached by sundown. Very few travelers were met that day, and when, just before turning off the main road, to reach Sedona, a very fine automobile was spied, like a tiny dot, coming from the opposite direction, it attracted general attention.

The two cars turned into the Sedona road with but a few minutes' difference in time—Mr. Dalken's car led, however. As the chauffeur found a good bit of road ahead, he turned and spoke through the tube at his side.

"I know the driver of that car, sir. He comes from Williams, and has been down to Flagstaff twice this past ten days. He had a man from Prescott, who's been looking out for some men to arrive from Chicago, but they didn't show up. I reckon Mr. Dunlap got tired of waiting around, and is on his way back to the ranch where he hopes to make a clean-up."

"Do you know the man called Dunlap?" asked Mr. Dalken, giving his friends a silencing look, when they would have exclaimed at the surprising information just heard from their chauffeur.

"Only from hearsay. Jim—that's the owner of that rear car—says he's very flush with his coin, and hired the car for a week. I saw the man at Flagstaff the last time he waited there for the men he expected."

"Did Jim hear who the men were—the ones that didn't show up?" asked Mr. Dalken, trying hard to keep the eagerness out of his tones as he spoke.

"No; but I overheard him ask the agent at the railway station if he was quite certain that three men did not come from Chicago and get off at Flagstaff. And the agent said he was sure! He also told Dunlap that the only men to arrive at

Flagstaff in the week, were three from Ash Fork, but they were not millionaires, because they were dressed like any other hard-working chaps—not a diamond or spare penny to be seen."

"You seem to be an observing young man, chauffeur," ventured Mr. Fuzzier.

"It pays to observe sometimes—specially when things are humming right under one's nose. Now I observed that you three men came from Ash Fork, but I should not say you were hard-working men—that is, with your hands. Your brains might work hard. I've done a little amateur detective work now and then, and I've enjoyed it. If I had to keep my comings and going dark, and should folks keep tabs on my movements from Chicago on to a certain spot in Arizona, I'd buy a ticket to Ash Fork and then back-trail to Flagstaff—as you three men have done this time. Am I right?"

His three passengers laughed outright; then Mr. Dalken replied: "You have over-stepped the line, young man. We did come from Ash Fork, as you noticed, but we had no movements to keep dark. In fact, we traveled with a gay and noisy party of young people, and stopped at every town along the Sante Fé where there were sights to be

seen, or places to be visited. So, you see, it is merely a coincidence that there are three of us, and your man Dunlap had been expecting three men, also. Besides I am from New York, and Mr. Alexander is from Denver, so there is another count gone wrong."

"What's your name, driver?" now asked Mr. Fuzzier, taking a pen and address book from his pocket.

"I'm Bill Beldon, a native of Gallup, but doin' business in Flagstaff. It's busy there in the summer season."

"Well, Beldon, I'm going to confide a little secret to you and surprise my friends here at the same time. If I make it worth your while to help me out of this fix, and keep your lips sealed about what you see or hear, will you stand by me?" Mr. Fuzzier winked at his two companions for silence, and Bill Beldon was instantly interested in this new development of what he considered a fine case for a detective.

"All right, Beldon. I'll take your word, in front of these two witnesses, to be as good as a bond. Now, gentlemen, prepare for the surprise: I'm one of those men from Chicago, but the other two did not come. And I'm the man the agent

Dunlap is after, but I do not wish him to catch up with me. Now, then, if Beldon can step on the gas and get us to our destination half an hour or so before Jim gets there, I'll make it well worth his efforts."

"By the Great Horned Spoon!" exclaimed Mr. Alexander, winking at a great rate, as he tried to make his voice sound full of surprise at what he had just heard.

"You are the closest mouthed man for a friend that I ever had," added Mr. Dalken. "You never told me a word of this secret."

"Why should I? I wouldn't have told you now, only Beldon has shown me that it is best to confide in the three of you. Well, Bill, what's your answer?" laughed Mr. Fuzzier.

"Oh, I'm your man, all right! I'll sign my name to a paper if you can manage to draw it up whiles this car is jogging over the road," exclaimed Beldon, eagerly.

"Look behind us, Dalken, and see how far away that other car is?" advised Mr. Fuzzier. "And, Alex., you get out the box of lunch we had packed for the girls—I grabbed it up and shoved it under the seat, when it was decided that we start at once for the ranch."

Mr. Dalken did as he was requested, but his report quickly drove all thoughts of lunch from their minds. "That other car has caught up with us—it is not more than twenty feet behind this one."

Then Mr. Fuzzier caught the tube and spoke to Beldon: "If you let that other car pass you, Bill, you don't get a cent. I'm a fine friend, but I'm a nasty enemy. Now get busy and keep that friend of yours in the rear—better still, get speed up and run away from him. I'd even bail you out of jail if you cracked the tires on that rear car. Understand how important this thing is?"

"I sure do! And Jim can't go back and say he made me take his gasoline smoke!" retorted Beldon, starting off at high speed, the moment a good bit of road was found.

Between Mr. Dalken and Mr. Fuzzier, the rear car was kept constantly in sight—now it drew nearer, then Beldon forged ahead; then the rear car would drop back, because the leading car would gain a long lap in the race. But the end was not yet, since Dunlap was not the man to lose out in a speculative deal whereby he had hoped to profit. He now knew from Algy that the three men he had been expecting had arrived in Flag-

staff, but they had not registered at the hotel, as he had thought they would do. He cursed himself for thinking that three millionaires would travel to Arizona to inspect a mining property, and wear clothes or gems to advertise their wealth. He should have known better, he thought.

Another thing that Dunlap had done, which had been a brilliant idea, was inviting the insignificant little heir of a fortune to tour with him. Algy had accepted gladly, but he had no idea of the tortures he would have to endure while on that trip. He had looked for a comfortable, enjoyable drive along fine state roads. Instead, he was compelled to endure jolts and jars that shook his frail little form as it had not been shaken since his heavy-handed father had died. Puny Algy did not like this method of traveling, but he had to go on, because Mr. Dunlap declared he could not turn back, nor was there any way Algy could reach a house or hamlet until the end of the journey.

Dunlap had no intention of letting this member of the Dalken party slip from his grasp, so he stood Algy's whimperings, and tried to soothe his plaintive begging to be sent back to dear Mrs. Alexander!

CHAPTER XI

WHAT HAPPENED ON HUMPHREY'S PEAK

JACK'S party drove to Humphrey's Peak as had been planned, and there they found that the automobile road leading part way up the mountain was in splendid condition. Therefore they decided to try to reach the peak, and get the marvelous view from the summit.

All went well while the good road continued, but once they got to the place where it became necessary to leave the car and take to horses, it was not quite comfortable. The guide thought they were taking chances against the weather—it had been cloudy all morning and the weather bureau had prophesied flurries of snow during the day.

"A little snow won't melt us hardened tourists!" exclaimed Eleanor, laughingly.

"Not after one has lived through Flat Top blizzards," added Polly, springing into the saddle on the horse she was to ride.

"That's all right, miss, but October is the latest month the guides think safe for folks to try for the peak. If you-all insist upon going up, I can take you, but it must be at your own risk, remember," explained the man.

"The weather has been unusually warm and open," said Jack, coaxingly, "and we are sure there is no risk to take."

"The guide ought to know his territory better than we do, Jack," argued Mrs. Courtney, troubled at what would be best to do.

"Oh, come on, folks!" commanded Dodo, impatiently.

"Yes, do come on, or the day will pass in arguing," abetted Jack, jumping into the saddle.

"Well, if you-all will promise me not to go beyond the zone which I think safe and will agree to turn and come back the moment I signify the return, I'll take you," finally agreed the guide.

"Don't you do it, if there is any unusual risk," begged Mrs. Courtney, anxiously.

"No, I won't! If the young people will promise me that, it will be perfectly safe," returned the man.

Being so eager to start for the climb, the four younger members of the group promised instantly. And off they started.

The altitude of Humphrey's Peak is 12,750 feet, and the approach to the summit is made over a gradually ascending road and trail made through mighty forests of pine. Aspens grow in thick profusion here and there—so thick, indeed, that one could not thread a way between the trunks without chopping away the obstruction. Reaching timber line, however, nothing grows beyond to hide the bare crags which continue on up to the very summit.

On the ride through the magnificent forest the guide told of the extensive view to be had from the peak—directly north, fifty miles away, one could see the walls of the Grand Canyon; still farther, were the Buckskin Mountains of the Kaibab Plateau; to the north-east one might see the Painted Desert, and beyond that the Navajo Mountain. Then, turning southward, one could see the White Mountains; and, gazing westward, one saw the Mogollon Plateau and other famous ranges. The Santa Fé railroad threaded the valley east and west like a winding serpent with head and tail hidden from sight. Small towns and set-

tlements dotted the country, and gave the necessary action to the wonderful picture.

"But I doubt if you will see these sights today, friends," concluded the guide. "If you reach timber-line without freezing in the saddle, you will do well."

"I'm sure you do not appreciate our hardihood," declared Polly impatiently. "I was brought up in the Rocky Mountains, near the highest peaks, and I am accustomed to this life."

"You forget, Polly, that several years in New York City, in steam-heated houses, and the enervating life we live there, may have changed your hardihood," remarked Mrs. Courtney, gently.

"Oh, well! that remains to be seen," retorted Polly.

Nothing more was said about the hazards to be met on the way, and thereafter every one felt buoyant and happy, because of the delight in riding good horses and the exhilarating air of the mountains.

Up and up and up climbed the well-trained horses, and finally the guide called a halt to rest the beasts. The riders leaped from the saddles and stretched their legs and arms for a time, then walked around to investigate the plateau. Only

a few minutes were allowed for the rest, then the guide called them to re-mount. As they ran to obey, Jack thought he saw a snowflake whirl across his vision. But he would not report it.

By the time all were ready to resume the ride, Jack was sure he saw another flake of snow falling slowly upon the horn of his saddle, still he would not speak of it.

But the guide had noticed the few scattered bits of snow, and he was determined to take no chances with his party. He led the way to a cross-trail on the mountain-side, and took the side trail instead of the one which ascended directly ahead of the riders. He planned to follow this gradually ascending road for a time, and, should the flurry of snow prove nothing more, he could regain the main trail farther on where another crosstrail struck upward. In case the snow came down heavier, and threatened to continue, he could lead his party back down the mountain from that crosstrail.

But a careful guide's plans may go astray, even like the wise mice in the fable, and so it happened with Job Barnes.

The pines were noticeably shorter and more slender as the trail ascended higher and higher,

and it was also seen that the trees looked tougher and many of them bore scars left by the winter storms. Many were twisted and their tops blunted from the fierce gales and blizzards which swept like cyclones over the peaks. But the trail continued good and interesting, and the little cavalcade rode on with many a merry jest and carefree laugh.

Finally they entered a thick forest of aspens through which the trail accommodated no more than one horse at a time. It was after riding halfway through the length of this forest, that a sudden gale of wind came down from the peaks, and with it came a great cloud of snow. Instantly the air became choked with fine snow, and the temperature dropped suddenly so that every one in the party began to shiver and shake. The horses, rebelling against going on in the face of this cold blizzard, balked, but they could not turn in the narrow tunnel between the aspens.

Fortunately the guide rode first, and Jack brought up the rear, so that the horses of the girls could not back nor forge ahead in order to get away from where they were.

"What shall we do?" shouted Jack, to get orders from the guide.

"Wait for a few moments and see if she blows over."

So they all sat as though frozen to the saddles, while the guide tied a rope to the horn of his saddle and then jumped from his horse and carried the rope back to tie a loop to each saddle in the line behind his horse. When Jack's horse, the last one, had been thus hitched up in line, the guide advised him.

"Don't let your horse balk or stampede. Use your spurs, if necessary, to control him. We're near a nasty bit of road that runs along the rim of a rocky ravine, and I'd like to keep this side of it if I can manage the animals so they will move slowly. I might have to chop down enough aspens to allow the horses to turn, so we can ride back the way we came, but chopping trees takes time, and I brought but one axe."

"Oh, we'll be all right," was Jack's assurance. "Just go on carefully, and warn us when we reach the gulch."

Another ten minutes was given to a slow progress along the narrow trail, and, then, the storm growing heavier, the guide decided to dismount and begin to cut down enough aspens to permit a turn in the trail. As he jumped down, however,

his feet became entangled in some way in the rope which he had tied to his saddle, and he fell. His foot struck upon a slippery projection of rock, and, turning over, down he crashed with a groan, bringing his heavy weight upon the twisted member.

The full import of this accident did not filter into the brains of the other riders for a second; then Jack saw the guide slump in a heap and he knew the man had fainted in spite of his endeavors to remain conscious.

"Great Scott! Barnes is knocked out! He must have hurt himself seriously!" cried Jack, springing from his saddle.

Polly was so experienced in handling situations of this nature that she quickly got down from her horse and hurried to the side of the injured guide. Before Jack could lift Barnes' head, Polly was beside him and had placed a restraining hand upon his arm.

"Just make him as comfortable upon the ground as possible, Jack, and then help me straighten out his leg. Perhaps it is not badly hurt," advised she.

Thus, while the other three riders waited anxiously, watching from their horses, Jack and

Polly helped the guide to a more natural position, and Jack fumbled for a possible flask of whiskey in the man's pockets.

Polly began to unlace the leather legging and heavy mountaineer's boot, but her fingers were so stiff with cold that she could not undo the wet laces. Jack had found a flask, and, pouring the cup-top on the bottle full of brandy, tried to force some between the lips of the man.

Not more than five minutes had passed since the guide had first leaped from his saddle, but in that time the snow had fallen so heavily that everything was covered with a white blanket. And the gale increased in velocity so that it blew the snow in every direction, and seemed to drive it under the riding clothes of the stylishly clad tourists.

After a second attempt to get some brandy down the throat of the guide, Jack succeeded and was repaid by seeing the eyelids twitch and slowly lift. Then the man became conscious all at once, and sat up, though he did not move his foot—it seemed limp.

"What a fix!" exclaimed Barnes, in disgust with himself. "A broken bone, and out here in this blizzard!"

"That's all right, Barnes—I'll cut down the aspens for you, and Polly, with the other girls, will drag them out of the way. The work will keep us from freezing," said Jack, cheerily.

"Don't forget me," called Mrs. Courtney, trying to act as cheery as Jack.

"If you only knew how to manage it, you ought to throw the blankets over the animals, or we may not have them fit to carry us back to the cabins," suggested the guide.

"We *do* know how to do it," replied Dodo. "I was brought up in Colorado, and Polly knows enough about horses to break the worst broncho. Jack, too, has been on the ranch. Just watch us."

So saying, Dodo jumped from her saddle, and Eleanor managed to slide out of hers. It took Mrs. Courtney longer to dismount, as she had become so cold and stiff.

The three,—Jack, Polly and Dodo,—then began to remove the saddles that they might pull off the blankets which were strapped under them. This done, they started to rearrange the blankets in order to cover the quaking horses.

"Jack, you better get busy chopping the aspens, because Dodo and I can blanket the animals," suggested Polly.

"Good! Hand me the axe fom Barnes' side," returned Jack, turning to the man who was trying to get upon one foot and assist the girls.

"You just sit still, Barnes—or you'll have a compound fracture. We'll get this straightened out in a jiffy," said Jack. Then he took the axe and began to whack at the nearest aspen. It was one directly ahead of Barnes' horse, and Jack figured logically that cutting down the few ahead of the horses would make it easier for them to turn, because the leader could step in and go around the narrow turn he proposed making. Then they would face the opposite direction from the one in which they now stood.

Polly and Dodo had blanketed three horses, and all three girls were engaged with the others, when Jack whacked a hard blow at the tree he was felling. The axe struck sideways, and a long sharp chip flew up and scuttled horizontally through the air. It struck the leading horse directly between the eyes, and that poor beast, already frightened by the blasts of howling wind which bore such cold sheets of sleet and snow into his face and chest, leaped up on his hind legs. In a second, he came pounding down again, and then

started off along the trail, pulling the other horses in his wake.

The three girls were so frightened at what had happened that they were incapable of moving for a moment; consequently Eleanor was thrown against an aspen with such force that she had the breath knocked out of her. Polly had been half over the back of one horse, in order to work a blanket down to the other side, and she was carried along while clinging desperately to the mane of the beast she was upon. Dodo was flat in a snow-drift.

Mrs. Courtney had been attending to Barnes' injured foot, and now she sprang up and called aloud in sudden fear. "Polly!"

Jack left the axe where he had dropped it and started off hot-footed to catch up with the escaping animals. The snow impeded the hoofs of the leading horse, and he soon found that running away in the teeth of a blizzard was not the fun it was in town, when he began to cut capers for amusement to those around. He had not galloped more than a hundred yards before he began to breathe hard. The high altitude had a lot to do with this, too, but the beast knew nothing of

altitudes. In the length of a few more yards he was glad enough to halt and try to catch his breath. This, naturally, stopped the other horses that were being dragged willynilly at the heels of their leader.

Jack ploughed through the broken snow as fast as he could lift his feet out of the clinging drifts, and after a hard sprint he caught up to the sweating animals. But now! how to turn them about? That was another problem, and he gazed in despair at the closely standing aspens which lined the sides of the trail.

Polly made a horn of her cupped hands and shouted at him. "Only one thing to do, Jack, and that is—cut down the aspens over there, instead of here. We'll have to come and help you, and leave Mrs. Courtney with the guide; we'll pick them up after we get the horses turned about."

Jack signified he had understood, and then, holding fast to the bridle of the leading animal, he waited until Polly brought the axe. The other girls followed in Polly's tracks, and, after a tiresome hike, they all went to work to remove the obstructing aspens. Jack now wielded the axe, with a zeal he had been unconscious of possessing, and the three girls worked in breaking down the

POLLY WAS CARRIED ALONG CLINGING DESPERATELY TO THE HORSE'S MANE.

younger growth of trees and throwing them back upon the trodden trail; since they would not return that way, but would lead the horses about the short turn they were making through the woods, it made little difference.

No one stopped to eat, though all were half-famished and half-frozen, as well. Mrs. Courtney tried to keep Barnes from being chilled, by helping him hop around upon one leg, keeping the injured one free from the ground. As Barnes was a heavy young man, and he had to lean upon his companion for support, she was thoroughly tired out by the time the horses were successfully led back through the narrow cleft made in the aspens. In fact, so narrow was it that many a tree-trunk scraped the sides of the horses as they were pulled and pushed and urged to go along to gain the good, though narrow, trail ahead.

This much was successfully accomplished at last, and the young people, who had had to chop and break down the aspens in order to get the horses turned about, heaved a sigh of gratitude when they halted the animals beside the guide.

"Now, our next job will be to hoist Barnes into his saddle," remarked Jack.

"That is not a difficult thing to do, because I

know how to help myself under all unexpected circumstances," was the cheery reply from the guide. As he spoke, he hopped over to his horse's side and caught hold of the saddle. At that moment a ray of sun burst through the black snow-clouds and glinted upon the winking eyes of the group of surprised riders.

"Well! can you beat that for contrariness?" cried Polly, glancing angrily up at the breaking storm-clouds.

"Just as we've finished our hard labor, to find the blizzard isn't going to blizz any more!" laughed Eleanor, whimsically.

"If the sun comes out eventually, what are we going to do—go on or turn back?" asked Dodo.

"Oh, we can't go on with Mr. Barnes in this condition. We must return as quickly as possible and see that he has surgical attention," declared Mrs. Courtney.

"Well, it is a great disappointment, not to see the view we were led to expect from the summit of the peak, but I am so tired out with shoveling snow, and with removing trees from this forest, that I'm just as well pleased if we get back to Flagstaff and can roll over into a warm bed," was Polly's verdict.

"Reckon you're right, Poll!" agreed Jack, as he sprang up into his saddle.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in carefully riding back to the cabins where the guides lived while the trails remained open. Here the old mountaineer who did the cooking for the men during the season, soon had steaming coffee, with bacon and eggs, ready to serve.

The girls would not have believed how good greasy eggs fried in bacon fat could taste, until that afternoon. Jack commented upon the evident relish with which they ate whatever was placed before them.

"No wonder!" laughed Polly, seeking carefully for the last crumb of black bread, "wood-cutters always come in after a hard day's work, with appetites like ravening wolves."

"That's us!" declared Dodo, ungrammatically. Then she smacked her lips with relish over the coffee, while her companions laughed.

Poor Barnes had the worst of that ride, for the small bones of his ankle had been fractured and he would have to keep it in splints for a long time, if he would have it knit well and be as good as ever. But this accident proved to be beneficial for future riders up Humphrey Mountain, for the

trail was ordered to be made wider and kept open and clear to protect man and beast in the future.

That evening, at the hotel, Polly remarked to her friends: "One place on the map that we won't see this trip!"

"I'm not grieving," laughed Jack. "I've seen all of that peak I ever care to."

"Um! I'm with Jack in that sentiment," added Eleanor.

"'Them's all our sentiments, too!'" giggled Dodo.

CHAPTER XII

TWO WEEKS LATER

JACK managed to escort his friends to all the other places of interest which they had decided to visit, and then, having heard from Mr. Dalken and his two companions that they were not to wait for them, the five members of the party at Flagstaff decided to go on to Grand Canyon, where they expected to meet Mrs. Alexander and Algy.

They heard from Mr. Barnes the last day of their stay in Flagstaff, and were pleased to learn that he was recovering quickly from his injury. Then they bid the hotel people good-by and started for Grand Canyon. They arrived at a time of year when few tourists think of visiting Arizona and its wonders. But they found that the first of December was the most wonderful of all seasons in the year to see the Canyon and the surrounding scenery. It beggared all attempts at description, when the snow flurried over the great

abyss, or the sun reflected a million points of colored lights from the icy crags and the frozen drips of water!

Mrs. Alexander, during the interval she had spent alone at El Tovar, had wearied herself with showing off all the costumes she had brought in her trunks; also she had had a most glorious time in smiling engagingly at every man who had registered at the hotel. It made no difference to this rejuvenated lady whether the male guests were young, or middle-aged, or decrepit—her attentions were bestowed alike with impartiality.

It had, therefore, become a standing joke with the hotel employees whenever a newcomer made his appearance, to wager just what he might do to escape the flirtatious lady. But no member on that staff dreamed that the lady was the wife of the plain, little millionaire from Denver.

She had been determined to play without marital limitations; consequently, learning that Algy had not appeared there, she had registered at the El Tovar as "Miss Alexandria Marget," and had thought herself most clever at the way she had changed her name.

When her grown daughter, Dodo, appeared upon the scene, however, Miss Marget could not

explain her former masquerade. And the hotel clerks were chagrined to find that they had been making sport of one of the wealthiest women in the west. Dodo, not aware of her mother's pastime, paid little heed to the humble attendants at the hotel.

The first day at Grand Canyon was devoted to visits to the Hopi and Navajo Indian settlement, where the girls watched with interest the handicraft workers in beads, willow, hide, and other curious things.

The second day at Grand Canyon, the weather became mild enough to permit a number of visitors to ride down the Bright Angel trail, and great preparations were made for spending the day and night down below, then coming up by another trail.

"You never expect to reach the bottom alive, do you?" demanded Mrs. Alexander, now restored to her rightful title.

"Why, of course!" retorted Dodo, laughingly. "It's just as safe now as in July—and there isn't a flake of snow to be had yet, so there is no danger along the trail. We had a far more dangerous time on going through the aspen brakes on Humphrey's Peak."

"Well, you foolish people may risk your necks if you choose, but don't ask me to do so, too!" declared Mrs. Alexander.

"You dislike riding, anyway, Ma, so it's just as well if you remain above," returned Dodo, hoping to be agreeable, yet hailing the news that her mother would not ride down with them.

The plan was perfected that evening, and the guides asked those who wished to take the trip to be ready in warm riding togs about eight in the morning. Then, after all was settled, a group of new arrivals poured into the hotel. With the strangers, Mrs. Alexander recognized a man whom she had seen at the Colorado Springs hotel. He was reputed to be a retired banker from San Francisco, but he everlastingly played golf while staying at the resort, and she had had no opportunity to try her charms to captivate him. Now, however, he had no chance to play his favorite game, so she planned to play her own little game with him.

Hearing that he would be one of the party to ride down Bright Angel, Mrs. Alexander suddenly changed her mind and said she, too, had decided to go with the rest. When she learned

later, that the trip had been extended to take in Ribbon Falls, and the nights' rest at Phantom Ranch, she wavered in her decision.

"How do I know I will have a decent bed at an old ranchhouse?" wondered she, debating what would be best to do.

But the impressive appearance of the man she had watched and admired at the Springs, proved too much for her dread of going without comforts. Hence, she was up soon after the call-boy rapped at her door in the morning, and then she started to dress herself in a (what she considered) fetching tourist costume. She was still arranging her hair, when Dodo knocked upon her door and called impatiently to her.

"Goodness, Ma! We're all through breakfast; it's time to start, and you're still prinking as for a ball! Hurry up!"

"I'm coming!" exclaimed the lady, but she failed to do so, until a third urgent call from her daughter brought her forth.

Mrs. Courtney and the girls were clothed in warm and serviceable riding habits, but Mrs. Alexander had sacrificed comfort to her desire to appear stylish. She wore a very youthful and natty outfit, better adapted to screen work in

Hollywood than a ride to the very bottom of Grand Canyon in December.

When the other members of the large party were notified that the tardy one had arrived and they could get upon the horses, Mrs. Alexander maneuvered to edge her horse quite close to the one which carried the man she wished to captivate. This gentleman, however, paid scanty attention to any one—he seemed to be thinking seriously of the beast he had to ride. Finally Mrs. Alexander played one of her trump cards.

"Oh, Mr. Guide! It would be much pleasanter for every one in this party if you would introduce us to each other. Seeing we are to be members of one large family, as it were, for the next few days, don't you think we ought to know by what names to address each other?"

One of the guides then rode up and introduced each one in turn, calling that one by name; and the others signified their delight at being introduced in this wholesale manner. When the man who was responsible for Mrs. Alexander's being one of the party was introduced as Mr. Atchison, the others bowed to him. Mrs. Alexander did more, however; she had, by degrees, worked her beast over so that she was quite near the magnet to

which she wished to attach herself; then when Mr. Atchison rode out of line for a moment to be introduced, she made her horse appear to start suddenly—thus she urged the animal into the place just vacated.

Mr. Atchison saw his former place was taken, and he sat waiting for the next man in turn to be introduced. Then he took that place, which brought him directly behind Mrs. Alexander. This was what she had hoped for, and, having succeeded in her little trick, she was delighted with herself.

The signal was given to start down the trail, and the guides warned every one about keeping close in the saddles, and letting the mounts seek their own foothold. No one was to dream of jumping off while on the down trail, nor were they to pull up the horses and halt the line behind. Other advices were given, and then the long cavalcade passed on its way.

Mrs. Alexander lost no time in following up the advantage she had secured by taking another's place in the line, and she chattered like a magpie all the way from the hotel to the rim of the canyon, turning constantly in the saddle to send a look at her admired follower—literally speaking.

Mr. Atchison had little need to reply, since the lady kept up a rapid-fire conversation which called for no answers. The burden of her information seemed to be about the days spent at Colorado Springs, when she envied him those marvelous shots! Had she known that the gentleman addressed was thinking of other things while she prattled, she might have changed her tactics.

When they came to Bright Angel Trail, and those in front had passed over the rim, Mr. Atchison suddenly woke up.

"Madam, you'd better keep your face turned in the direction you're riding, or you may never have time to regret the error," said he, seriously, seeing Mrs. Alexander's head turned towards him.

This silenced her for a time, and she paid strict attention to the descent, but she planned at the same time just what she would do when the party reached the first dismounting place to rest.

Soon afterwards, Mrs. Alexander found, in all seriousness, enough to think of to keep her from sending one backward look at Mr. Atchison, or, indeed, to continue planning what she

might do when the tourists reached Indian Gardens. Like most shallow persons, she was dreadfully afraid of hurting herself, or of dying. Consequently, when her mount seemed to edge too near the very rim of death, she shrieked aloud in terror, or tried to drive the wise horse closer to the wall. The result of these frantic actions were shown in torn skirts, skinned thighs and scraped boots, where she rubbed against the flinty walls of the Canyon.

After many trying incidents for Mrs. Alexander, and the impatient advices forced from Mr. Atchison, who considered the hysterical woman would have been better off in bed than on this trip, they reached Indian Gardens and were glad to get out of the saddles and relax.

Mrs. Alexander instantly fastened herself to her latest "ideal," by taking his arm and thanking him profusely for his care and concern over her on the way thus far. She gazed, with what she fondly believed to be a soulful look, up into his face, and he, prosaic man, laughed aloud at her gushing manner.

"Why, my dear woman, I only warned you of dangers, because it would be so unpleasant to have the whole crowd depressed by having you

slide out of sight over the rim of the trail. I came here with my friends to enjoy myself, not to attend a post mortem. And I earnestly advise you to remain here at the Gardens, until we return up-trail and take you back," suggested Mr. Atchison.

Mrs. Alexander failed to hear the sarcasm in the speech, and she may have continued her blandishments had the gentleman not released his arm by wriggling it away from her hold and instantly excusing himself. He then hurried over to the place where the guides were preparing luncheon for the party, and there he seemed deeply engaged in conversing with two of them. Mrs. Alexander watched and saw him pass a bill to one of the men, and the two guides addressed nodded their heads, and, grinning, seemed to agree to a proposition.

Mr. Atchison then mingled with others, and found his friends with whom he had arrived at the hotel late the night before. Dodo and her friends now joined Mrs. Alexander so that she had no new opportunity to appeal to her beau ideal.

After the rest period had passed, the guides called all to mount once more. One guide seemed

to have difficulty in adjusting the saddle on Mrs. Alexander's horse, and this delayed her in finding her place in the line. It became necessary for the guide to call another one to aid him in fastening the straps, and, finally, Mrs. Alexander found she would have to ride at the very end of the line; one of the guides, now attending to her saddle-straps, being the last member of the party. The other guide was just in advance of her.

"Why! this isn't my place, at all!" cried Mrs. Alexander, angrily, seeing Mr. Atchison riding with his friends.

"There are no reserved places, Madam," replied the guide.

Mrs. Alexander turned to look at the man, and then she recognized the guide who had taken the money from Mr. Atchison.

"That's what you *say,* but how about selling places?" snapped she, beginning to understand that the man she wished to captivate had purchased his way out of her reach.

"Beware, Madam! Your mount is slipping while you twist and turn like this," exclaimed the guide, warningly.

Since the animals had started on the down trail again, there was nothing to be done about recov-

ering her first place in the line. But Mrs. Alexander was not one to be so readily turned from her object. If she could not succeed in one way, she would try in other ways. And there was no one to warn Mr. Atchison of this.

Just below Indian Gardens the leading guide turned off the Bright Angel Trail and followed the Tonto Trail, which led down to the bottom of the Canyon, and finally, known as the Kaibab Trail, ran across the Colorado, via the great suspension bridge. Farther on they reached Phantom Ranch, which was located in Bright Angel Canyon.

The trip had been most enjoyable to every one but that one who had a chip upon her shoulder. And finally, when the party dismounted at Phantom Ranch for the night, they were tired from the long ride, but eager to enjoy supper and an evening indoors.

Mrs. Alexander had planned to square herself with Mr. Atchison that evening, but she was so worn out from riding all day that the unusual exercise made her only too glad to crawl into bed. She ordered her supper sent to her room, and she also commandeered a maid to rub her aching bones with liniment. That proved to be

an unusual bonanza for the servant, because Mrs. Alexander never was niggardly in rewarding dependents, and this girl had eased her distress to such a degree that she lavished money upon her in return.

Early the following morning the guides roused their party and urged them to make haste and get along the trail again. Mrs. Alexander found herself so stiff and sore, however, that she could not get up. Try as she would to move her joints and make her limbs obey her order, she found she lacked power to do so. Hence it was found that she would have to remain at Phantom Ranch that day and rest in order to continue back up-trail to El Tovar Hotel the next morning.

Naturally she rebelled against nature's demand, and she proved she could be a disagreeable guest. But Mr. Atchison had acquitted himself bravely, as well he might, seeing he was to be freed from tiresome attentions all that day.

In a spirit of mischief, as well as of freedom, he sent a large box of bon bons and several magazines to Mrs. Alexander's room with his card, upon which he wrote "regrets."

Of course, Mrs. Alexander decided that the

gentleman was heart-broken because she would not be with him that day, and she smiled, even as she groaned with aching bones; then she turned to open the box of candy.

The season for crowds of tourists having long been passed, the Ranch host had not stocked up with fresh bon bons. The box sent to Mrs. Alexander had been discovered back upon a shelf of the cupboard, and no one knew how long it had been hiding there. Consequently, the first bite in the chocolate-covered cocoanut bar caused Mrs. Alexander to get rid of it quicker than she had bitten into it. The cocoanut had soured, and the lady was finicky about her candies.

That box of sweets proved to be as genuine a failure as the love-affair Mrs. Alexander had planned between the donor of the bon bons and herself. With a deep sigh, she now turned her attention to the magazines. Here, at least, she would find pastime in whiling away the lonesome hours that day!

The first magazine she took up was the Popular Science Monthly, having, as advertised, all the pictures of recent inventions and scientific discoveries. This periodical she flung across the room—what had she in common with such stuff!

The second magazine was found to be the Literary Digest. But it was several months old, and not an item in it about fashions or society gossip! This paper followed the first magazine —across the room.

The third and last copy turned out to be a more fortunate choice of literature for this lady. It was a popular love-story magazine, but it had been well-thumbed by guests during the year it had been upon the table of the inn, and Mrs. Alexander scrutinized its torn pages doubtfully, as she turned them over daintily.

Desire overcame doubt, however, and soon she was gloating over the success of a beautiful young shop-girl who had won an earl's son for her husband. This was the kind of "literature" Mrs. Alexander preferred, and she forgot her aches and loneliness, while devouring the romances of impossible lovers.

Meanwhile Polly and her friends reached Ribbon Falls, and enjoyed the trip immensely. Mr. Atchison found Mrs. Courtney and her charges very agreeable, and the two parties became very friendly before they started on the return ride to the Ranch where they would spend the second night.

The weather continued warm and delightful, and the guides declared they had never known such a prolonged Indian Summer since the beginning of the World War. If it remained warm and temperate as it was then they would be able to conduct visitors down the trails of the Canyon all winter.

Mr. Atchison showed a marked preference for Mrs. Courtney's society that day, and Polly nudged her friends to have them watch the grey-haired man singe his heart at the flame.

"Not much flame about Mrs. Courtney," retorted Jack, laughing at Polly's remark.

"Well, I used that saying because it is common, but I suppose I should have said he'd freeze his heart at the ice-berg," was her laughing correction.

"That's better!" agreed Eleanor. "Any one who can resist the attractions of our Dalky, as Mrs. Courtney has done, must have a cake of ice where her heart should be."

"That remains to be seen," remarked Dodo, wisely. "There hasn't been opportunity for the two to get acquainted this trip, but wait till this mining scheme ends, then we shall see!"

"Meanwhile, let that grey-haired man keep

your friend in practise, eh?" chuckled Jack, watching the man who was so attentive to the lady under discussion.

On the ride back to the Ranch, Mr. Atchison hovered about Mrs. Courtney, and when, at last, they rode up to the house, he insisted upon helping her out of the saddle, and then assisting her to the porch.

Mrs. Alexander had dressed late that afternoon, and was waiting for the return of the riders, hurrying out to the porch the moment she heard the hoofs of the horses. She was just in time to see her whilom beau smile foolishly at Mrs. Courtney's thanks, and then she fixed him with her eye.

"I trust you had a pleasant ride, Mrs. Courtney," began Mrs. Alexander, still staring the mature admirer out of countenance. "I preferred the solitude of this ranch to the troublesome attention of elderly men! I had quite enough of that ridiculous sort of nonsense on the ride down. What a pity old men never know when they are passé!"

With this thrust, Mrs. Alexander took Mrs. Courtney's arm and led her safely away from the "nonsense" of passé admirers.

CHAPTER XIII

DALKY'S STORY

THE Dalken party rested the day after the return to the hotel, and then, the day following that, Jack had the guides take them down the Hermit Trail. Mrs. Alexander refused emphatically to risk her precious life again on such silly errands as those leading to the bottom of the Canyon, only to have to ride up again!

They stopped over night at the Hermit Cabins, and then back-trailed until they reached the Tonto Trail where it forks from the Hermit Trail. The Tonto Trail led them along the Colorado River, but necessarily swerving in and out between the huge peaks. Late that afternoon they came to Bright Angel Trail, and thus regained the upper level once more. It was quite dark by the time they entered the hotel, and, at first, the lights dazzled their eyes so that they did not see who was standing beside Mrs. Alex-

ander. In a few moments, however, Polly gave a glad squeal and rushed forward.

"Oh, Dalky! I'm *so* glad to see you again. When did you get here?"

Mr. Dalken was immediately surrounded by the bevy of young people, so that he found it impossible to reply to all their questions at once. Turning to Polly, he answered her.

"We arrived not half an hour ago, and Mrs. Alexander was just telling us about that dreadful trip down to Phantom Ranch. I only wish I had been there, to try to encourage you when you feared instant death over the rim of Bright Angel. Mrs. Alexander says the trail got its name from the many lives which are being sacrificed while trying to go up or down that perpendicular path." Mr. Dalken's face showed no hint of a smile as he spoke, but Dodo laughed outright.

"Why, Ma! I should think you'd try to keep your fears to yourself," exclaimed the girl. "As for telling any one how the trail got its name—that is too absurd for anything! Some one has been stringing you, that's all."

"I reckon I ought to know, young lady!" snapped Dodo's mother. "Mr. Atchison is very well-informed, and he spent more than an hour

this morning before he left, in telling me all about Grand Canyon and how the trails got their various names."

"Mr. Atchison tried to see just how much hot air you would take," chuckled Mr. Alexander.

"Ebeneezer! I told you a few minutes ago that you must not treat me as you have in the past. I realize how far above you I am in my ideals and social polish, and I demand recognition of my station," was Mrs. Alexander's severe reprimand.

Her husband failed to be impressed by her hauteur, however, and his laugh echoed through the room. In fact, it was so spontaneous and contagious that all the others in the group—except Mrs. Alexander, of course—had to smile with him.

"Well, well, girls! Come sit down and hear our story," interrupted Mr. Dalken, eager to silence these two bickering partners. And that invitation instantly changed the trend of thought.

"Now, begin at the very beginning, Dalky—when you-all left us at Flagstaff and rushed away without telling us where, or who with, or when you'd get back," coaxed Polly, eagerly.

"All right, then," agreed Mr. Dalken. "In the parlance of the fairy tales, I'll say: 'Once upon

a time there were three wise men who went to a far-off land to seek their fortunes.'" The narrator smiled as he indicated Mr. Fuzzier, Mr. Alexander and himself. "Well, these wise men thought they had reached the land of their dreams without others being aware of their coming. But they were to learn that not only had certain individuals in Chicago telegraphed the advent of these wise men to certain individuals in and near the section of country where the three friends were going to take fortune by the forelock, but they discovered also that every movement since they left Chicago until they were on the drive from Flagstaff to Sedona was known to those who were waiting with their nets wide open to entrap the unwary, innocent, gullible, wise men."

The girls giggled at Mr. Dalken's latter part of the tale, but Polly interpolated: "Oh, do speak in simple English, Dalky! The story is going to be too thrilling for round-about methods."

"All right, then. Seeing you prefer unvarnished facts to classic lore, here goes," was the smiling rejoinder. "Jack, there, secured a most valuable chauffeur for us,—but this was quite unintentional on his part,—the morning we started from Flagstaff. In fact, we could not have had a

better man for our purpose, than the driver of the car that sped us along the trail to Montezumas Castle.

"Bill Beldon, that's the chauffeur's name, seemed to have a hunch that we needed speed to reach the old Farview Ranch before Father Time could arrive there. So he kept his foot upon the gas without letting up, until we struck a spread of gravel and that introduced our vicissitudes. First Alex. ran up against a bit of gravel as large as his head, and, his head being softer than the stone, he showed results in a vast swelling. Then Fuzzy tried to dent the car with his forehead, and immediately *his* head began to puff up. I waited for a better opportunity to dent something, and I found it while stooping over Alex. Unfortunately for us both, the chauffeur tried the same stunt at the same time. Result: two more swelled heads. Now, girls, picture us four men, each one nursing a great black and blue lump about the size of an orange!"

At the mental picture portrayed, every one present laughed merrily; then Jack added: "I bet you won out in your plans, or you wouldn't sit there giving us the funny details of the first stage of the trip."

"Jack, my boy, you are too bright for your age," commented Mr. Fuzzier. Mr. Dalken paid no heed, but resumed his story.

"While we were trying to stand Alex. upon his feet, Bill explained how he had learned who we were, and how a man by the name of Dunlap had been anxiously waiting for us at Williams, where he thought we must appear on the way to Grand Canyon. He also told us how the chauffeur of Dunlap's hired car, Jim, by name, was a chum of his, and how Jim had driven Dunlap to Flagstaff twice that week to study the register of the hotel and assure himself that his quarry had not been there, and, perhaps, escaped him by another way.

"That was all we needed to make us forget heads and tires, and we urged Bill to get busy with the gas, or he'd be a dead man.

"Needless to add, Fuzzy, here, assuaged the driver's grief over the damage the car would be sure to receive on that reckless trip from the main road to Sedona, by promising him two new cars —or the price of them—if he got us to the ranch before others woke up to the fact that we were within a hundred miles of it.

"Well, Bill Beldon won his prize money, but

it was touch and go at the last. I'm anticipating the finale of the tale in order to quiet Jack's nerves—I see he wants to know if we won out."

"Hurrah!" cried Jack, clapping his hands at the news. "That means you go on with the South American project, and I can go down there with the rest of the men to work on the development."

Mr. Dalken smiled indulgently, for he thought he knew Jack well enough to believe him incapable of serious application to work of any kind. Then he continued his story.

"We left the main road, as I said, and were heading for Sedona, when Bill struck this gravel stretch. The car behind had a good opportunity now to catch up and pass us by, but the road was too narrow to permit two cars abreast. Besides, our car, in striking the deep rut, had turned partly across the road, thus obstructing it for any other vehicles. All the same, we saw the driver, Jim, driving along swiftly, and we were determined to evade his passenger, Dunlap.

"We bundled Alex. back into the car, and in another moment Bill was in his seat. By the time Fuzzy and I were inside, the car had started again, and we soon out-distanced the car behind.

"We decided not to pass through Sedona, after

all, but we tried to keep on the outskirts in order to avoid attention. From there we determined to strike in a southwesterly direction towards Camp Verde. The ranch we were after was halfway between Sedona and Verde, and we would have to go a bit off of our route in order to travel on ready-made trails.

"All went well for us,—even the tires held out better than we had expected them to do,—until we came to a cross-trail that struck in from Clarkdale. Just before we reached the point where the trail veered off to the great ranch for which we were bound, Bill spied a third car coming from the direction of Clarkdale. As it was going at top speed, he concluded that it had passengers who thought time must be worth money. So he drew our attention to it.

"'We take no chances, Bill!' I ordered. 'It may be a second Dunlap in that car. Anyway, shoot ahead, and keep in the lead, no matter if the whole works go to pieces a moment after we reach the ranch.'

"And Bill did shoot ahead. In fact, we made the turn to the ranch about fifty yards in advance of the automobile coming from Clarkdale.

"The ranch buildings could be seen in the far

distance like so many tiny dots upon the landscape, when our next delay came about. One of the rear tires blew up. Bill gazed anxiously out to see how much advanced time he might take and yet keep in the lead of the pursuing car. No other automobile was to be seen, so we all jumped out, jacked the car, and worked like college football players at a crack game. You'd hardly believe it, if we were to tell you the time it took us to change tires and get started again. Just as Alex. slammed the door of the automobile, I peeped out and saw the car from Clarkdale coming into view on the trail.

"Then, even as I was about to turn my gaze away, I saw the car skid, and in another moment it had climbed up the side of the bank that skirted the trail. It toppled over against the high side of the embankment; that was fortunate for us, as we could not have been heartless enough to leave an injured competitor upon a lonely trail had the car rolled over on the downward side and turned turtle.

"We had gone another mile, when Alex., who was posted at the rear window watching the trail behind, reported that another car was coming along the trail, and the man who had been in the

overturned automobile was hailing the chauffeur to stop. In another moment, Alex. said: 'Now they've stopped, and the man is getting in the other car. Now they are on their way again. But we have a fine lead on them.'

"He had no more than finished speaking, when the front tire went flat. I shouted to Bill to keep right on running on the flat tire, if necessary, since it was not far now to the ranch buildings.

But the flat tire delayed us in the race, and the jolting was dreadful. In fact, when we pulled up in front of the one-story shack where we were to meet the man who had the legal right to sign an option for the property, we were completely out of breath from the shaking up. We had reached our destination, however, five minutes in advance of the other men, and Bill had earned his reward.

"Then I ran to the closed door, and banged away at it. No one answered, and I tried the handle. The door was locked! Then we ran about the place, Fuzzy to the sheds, Alex. to the back of the shanty, and I to try a window to get in. All to no purpose! Not a soul could we find, and no notice, either, to state where the owner might have gone.

"To our chagrin the other automobile now pulled up in the clearing before the shack, and Jim greeted his pal, Bill Beldon. We stood eyeing the occupants of the car, as they prepared to get out, and there, to our astonishment, we saw Algy step from the inside. He appeared to be so frightened, and so shaken up, that he could not speak to any one for a time. Two men followed directly after him, and they came forward without ceremony to introduce themselves to us.

" 'Is this the party from Chicago?' asked the man whom we suspected to be Dunlap.

" 'Why do you ask?' I demanded impatiently, realizing how we had missed the option on the place by having the owner break his appointment.

" 'Because I must be sure I am addressing the right party before I tell my story,' explained Dunlap.

" 'And how about the man with you?' asked Fuzzy. 'He came from the opposite direction, and but for the accident to his car, would have reached here just ahead of you. Now he is with you.'

" 'Yes; I was greatly surprised to find Mr. Belnord in the vicinity of the ranch, because I had reason to believe him at Williams, where I left

him the day I started for Flagstaff,' explained the man addressed.

" 'Then you make no secret of having tried to anticipate our arrival at Flagstaff, and keeping yourself posted in regard to our appearance at Williams?' questioned Fuzzy, with a meaning smile.

" 'Oh, indeed, no! That is, if you are the three gentlemen for whom I have instructions,' returned the man.

" 'What do you mean—instructions for us?' asked Alex.

" 'Why, didn't you get the telegram I sent to Mr. Fuzzier in Chicago?' asked both men, anxiously. Then one added: 'One of you three gentlemen must be Mr. Fuzzier, I trust?'

" 'Well, yes! I am the man,' confessed Fuzzy.

" 'And one of you must be the Mr. Dalken of New York, whom we wish to see, and the third one is Mr. Alexander, of Denver?'

" 'Seeing that we happen to be these three men, what is it you wish of us?' I asked.

" 'Why,' began the man who had been toppled over in the automobile, 'I am Mr. Belnord, executor of the man who owned this great tract of

land. I found, in his sheaf of papers, that he had corresponded with you gentlemen about an option on this land. And he further said, that he wished you to have first choice on buying the place, because Ebeneezer Alexander had befriended him years ago while both men were at Cripple Creek staking out claims. It seems this Alexander had staked a rich claim, and had advised my client to stake the adjoining claim. He did so, and cleared up enough on that advice to buy this great ranch.'

"'And I am Mr. Dunlap, the agent who sold Sam White this ranch. I happen to know that Sam always suspected his property of having a rich vein of copper in it, and we often planned what we would do some day, if Sam got over his rheumatism and could work. Poor Sam died two weeks ago, and Mr. Belnord and I have been on the lookout for you gentlemen ever since. We both had wires from your offices in Chicago and New York, informing us that you would be on your way to Grand Canyon by the time the messages reached us. And we posted ourselves at the two main towns on the railroad, thinking you might get off to have a look at the sights on the way.'

"'When Dunlap and I heard you had gone on to the ranch, we both started after you, hoping to save you the long, hard drive over these dreadful trails. But you've got one fast driver, in that Bill Beldon,' explained Mr. Belnord.

"At that, we three stared speechlessly at the two men. I managed to get my breath, however, and then asked: 'Do you two mean to tell us that you were trying to locate us in order to help us take up the option on this land?'

"'Why, of course! What did you think we wanted of you?' asked Mr. Dunlap.

"At that, we had to laugh at ourselves, but Bill Beldon stood looking glum. He feared he would lose that reward, because he had misinterpreted the intentions of the man Dunlap.

"'I will confess, gentlemen,' added Mr. Dunlap, after we had exhausted our laughing-stock, 'that I had my own axe to grind, as well as seeing you get possession of this land. I bought a great tract of land adjoining White's ranch, because of my faith in his powers of discernment. And I thought, perhaps, if you were interested in taking up Sam's ranch, you would also like to look over my tract at the same time. I want to get into a big developing scheme, and I have a little cash to

add to the value of my land, if you will consider me as one of your stock-holders. So, now, gentlemen, suppose we get down to business.'

"Well, friends! That's the story of how we 'Three Wise Fools' ran ourselves across the country in search of a paper that was right at hand in the little town from which we started. And all the time we thought we were running away from our competitors, we actually were running away from the two men who were anxious to help us realize our wishes." Mr. Dalken laughed as he concluded.

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Polly, delightedly.

"And you got all you went after?" asked Eleanor.

"More! And we need not have gone so far to get it, either," replied Mr. Fuzzier.

"Mr. Dalken's name for you three seems most appropriate," laughed Mrs. Courtney, "but your wooden shoe was an automobile, and the sea you sailed was the ranch-land. Now, however, we are glad to find you have sailed safely back to harbor."

"Thank you for that, Fair Lady," smiled Mr. Dalken.

Mrs. Alexander had no idea of what Mrs. Courtney had been referring to when she spoke of the wooden shoe and the sailing over the sea, and she felt that she must add a word now.

"I was not told that Ebeneezer and you two other men wore wooden shoes on that trip to the ranch, but that doesn't concern *me,* if you prefer to wear sores on your feet. What does concern me, however, is Mr. Belnord. Where did you leave the gentleman who was so attentive to me during my stop-over at Williams?"

"Why, Maggie, you'll find him back in Chicago, by this time, I hope. We sent him on at once to attend to all the papers concerning our transaction," explained Mr. Alexander.

"And what did you do with my poor Algy?" demanded the lady.

"Your Algy is still mooning around Williams, waiting as you commanded him to do," chuckled Mr. Alexander.

"You didn't leave him there, did you, and come on to Grand Canyon, where you knew I would be?" exclaimed his wife.

"Algy is of age, and he was afraid to disobey you, Maggie, dear! You've got him trained bet-

ter than I ever was," retorted her independent husband.

"My poor, dear Algy!" sighed Mrs. Alexander, leaving the group and going to the desk to wire at once for her obedient admirer to join her at Grand Canyon.

CHAPTER XIV

LETTERS EAST AND WEST

MR. DALKEN and his party remained at the Grand Canyon two days longer, and then started for Prescott, where they would stop at the leading hotel until Mr. Belnord returned from Chicago with the signed papers for the three investors.

So interested were the members of the Dalken party on the way from Grand Canyon, that they arrived at Williams before they were aware of it. Here they were to change for Ash Fork, and at that town they would change again for the train which ran to Prescott.

As Mrs. Alexander and Algy sat in the seat together, they heard the guard announce Williams. Algy heaved a heartfelt sigh, and then said: "Shall I eveh forget this place? I felt I had been deserted by my best and only friend!"

"You didn't act as though you felt that way," retorted his "best and only friend." "I came

here for you, and you had motored with that man to the ranch. That's how you broke your heart over being here alone."

"Aw, don't say that, Mrs. Alexandeh, because you do not know how the fellaw coaxed me to go and keep him company," explained Algy.

There was no time to say more at that time, since all had to hurry to change cars. And Algy's shallow mind soon forgot the complaint he had to make in exoneration of his leaving Williams.

Mrs. Alexander maintained a dignified silence all the rest of the train-ride to Prescott, because she felt that Algy must be trained to realize that she was the one to order and plan. Algy, nevertheless, seemed not to miss her conversation because he was preoccupied in watching Jack and the girls.

The three days spent in sight-seeing around Prescott were enjoyable ones, and the entire party also made trips to many points a distance from the town. The roads were excellent, and the weather continued as mild as though it were summer instead of December. One of the auto trips made at that time was along the Cherry Creek road, thence along the Rio Verde to Camp Verde.

From Camp Verde, Mr. Dalken had the chauf-

feurs drive them on to Crown King, where he wished to inspect certain parcels of land offered for sale. As the vicinity of Crown King had recently developed rich mineral deposits, it behooved these careful investors to examine the truth of such reports.

Mr. Belnord arrived in Prescott the evening of the third day of the Dalken's party visit there. The success of his trip to Chicago made a gala night of his appearance with the recorded deeds, and the elderly men of the party joined in the dancing with the younger generation with such vim that they soon wilted.

During the next two days at the hotel, a budget of letters arrived for the members of the touring party. These letters had been forwarded from one place to another all along the line, and now, ten days later, they were delivered to the right persons.

Polly received more personal letters than any one of her friends, but then, it was remembered that Tom would be sure to mail her a letter every day, even though it contained but the one oft-repeated sentiment: "I love you. Will you marry me, Polly?" These easily recognized letters were left to the very last, however, and Polly eagerly

read the communications from her friends in the East.

"Oh, girls, *girls!*" exclaimed she, having read half through one of her New York letters. "Guess the news—it's wonderful!"

"What—oh, what is it?" demanded several voices, their owners looking expectantly at Polly.

"Why, Nancy Fabian is engaged to Raymond Ames—the chum Jack brought aboard the yacht at Palm Beach, during our southern cruise, you know!" exclaimed Polly, aware of the importance of her news.

"No! You don't mean to tell me that Ray is such a ninny as to fall in love with a girl!" was Jack's disgusted comment.

"Of course not!" retorted Eleanor, quickly. "It's poor Nancy who is the goose. To think of such a brilliant, talented girl throwing herself away upon a mere young man! Now, if this friend of Jack's had anything to recommend him other than his acquaintance with a ne'er-do-well that we all know too well, but whom we will not mention, it might be pardonable. But to see *Nancy* choose Ray!"

"Umph!" snorted Jack, highly indignant at her tone. "I bet anything you girls would just give

your heads to have an offer of marriage from such a good-looking chap. *I* know some girls who would like to catch *me!*"

"Oh, hark! The little vanity bag!" laughed Dodo.

The others joined in the laugh, as much at her comparison as at her contagious laughter.

"Well, anyway, there is hope that Nancy may be saved from taking the fatal step in matrimony," mused Polly, glancing at the letter in her hand. "She writes that there is no idea of her marrying in the near future, but Ray and she decided to announce an engagement to stop every one from asking them 'when is it to be?' "

"I just want to see any one drive me to such extremes by asking impertinent questions. I'd tell them mighty quick just where they get off!" declared Dodo, tossing her head.

"Good reason why you'd like to see them ask you," teased Jack.

This second hint from him brought down an avalanche of protests from the three girls—as he knew it would. He dearly loved to tease them, and nothing pleased him better than to have them all defending themselves at one time.

"You certainly have a bad memory, Jack Bax-

ter!" exclaimed Eleanor. "I can remember, not many years ago, when you fell in love with first one and then the other one of us girls. When you got the mitten from Polly, you threatened to commit suicide. But you merely took a trip to Pebbly Pit. Then you began again, and fell in love with me. I soon showed you the exit, however! And you next tried the game on Dodo. She felt sorry for you, and told you in a gentle manner that she would prefer to be your sister. But, at that time, she had no idea of what a wretched brother you'd make. Now you're willing to fall in love with any girl who'll look at you —only they won't look your way!"

While Eleanor had unburdened her heart of this long complaint, Polly had hastily opened Tom's last letter. As she had expected, she found his letter wound up with his usual proposal. She waved the letter defiantly under Jack's nose, and then added: "There, you conceited child! Don't tell us we never have an offer from a beau. Here's one in this letter—and I can marry the man any day I care to speak the word. In fact, he'd follow me all the way to China, if I said I'd marry him in Pekin!"

"Oh, you mean Tom Latimer," returned Jack.

"We all know *he* doesn't mean what he says. He is so used to proposing now, that he does it from force of habit. If you were to write and tell him you'd consider his offer, he'd soon back down in some way."

"Why!" gasped Polly, frowning at Jack. "I'd just like to shake you till your teeth rattled."

Jack roared. He hadn't enjoyed himself so much in a long time. "My teeth can't rattle, Poll. They're set in too firmly."

"Oh, go along with you!" cried Dodo, jumping up and catching the torment by the shoulders and wheeling him right-about-face and then marching him from the room.

Jack found Dodo's muscle too much for him, and he had to make a graceful, though forced, exit. When he heard the key turn in the lock of the door, he hurried to the desk and asked the clerk to kindly ascertain why it was that that reception room door was locked.

Naturally the clerk was amazed at such temerity in any one stopping at the hotel, and he hastened to demand that the door be opened at once! The three girls, believing Jack was knocking and demanding entrance, refused to unlock the door. Consequently, the clerk went for a pass-key and

in a short time had the door wide open. When the two sides—the girls and the clerk—faced each other, the truth came out, and Jack was destined to have a trick played upon him to square accounts with the girls.

Other letters from friends at Pebbly Pit and from New York were received by the members of Mr. Dalken's party, and then Mr. Dalken sat down to reply to those which he had received from Mr. Ashby that day. After telling him of the successful issue of his attempt to secure the valuable mining land near the competing copper company's vast lands, he went on to speak of the strides the new corporation, called "South American Interior Developing Company," were making. Then he spoke of his future plans.

"You see, Ashby, the terrific earthquake in Japan has made a visit to the Orient out of the question at present. Now the question is: Have your friends in New York thought of any place you might choose for next summer's vacationing, instead of Japan?

"Since we are all so far west, and will be in California after Christmas and during the following three months, I am inclined to take that President Harding trip to Alaska—that is, I think it

would be splendid to visit the same places he saw, and do Alaska thoroughly, before we go outside of our own country.

"If the Fabians and you with your family started for San Francisco in April, I will have completed all my business visits by that time, and we could lease a small steamer or yacht, and sail leisurely northward. We could stop whenever we pleased, as we did upon the trip to the West Indies, and down the coast of South America. We could follow the pathway now so well known, because our honored President passed that way to Alaska, and we might go farther inland, and northward, to look over the mining industries there. It ought to give us many valuable points on the wisdom of selecting mining equipment for our South American work.

"We would have at least three to four months in which to enjoy this trip, but I will say that I see little hope of your finding any goods whatever suitable for your Decorating Shops. This time it will be a genuine rest for you—and you need it, old man!

"We can be back in San Francisco by the last week of August, and you can devote a little time then to looking up the latest imports from the

Orient, in California. You may find enough rare bargains to make it worth coming on such a long trip.

"I am writing the Fabians to-night, also, and you two families can get together and talk things over, then write and let me know your final decision. Remember, however, that we ought to start for Alaska not later than May, if we hope to have a good visit there and get back in San Francisco by the last of August.

"If you folks should decide to travel by the Canadian Pacific road and meet us in Seattle, you must give us ample time in which to change our plans to meet you there. It will matter little to me whether it be San Francisco or Seattle, just as long as you give me plenty of notice.

"The Colombian Development plan is going ahead splendidly, and Fuzzier plans to take Alexander with him to visit the territory for which he has options. They will sail from San Francisco as soon as we arrive there, and expect to be in South America the greater part of the next six months."

Having concluded his letters to his friends in New York, Mr. Dalken walked to the mail-box

to post them. Here he met Polly about to mail a letter she had just finished.

"Dalky, did you say anything about Tom Latimer going to South America with Fuzzy and Dodo's father?" asked Polly.

"No, I was not aware that Tom is expected to join us again," replied Mr. Dalken. "I thought his huff seemed to be permanent."

"I am not aware of his intentions either," admitted Polly, "but I heard him telling my brother that he'd love to go with the men who would visit Colombia to take up the options on that land."

"Well, if that is so, I'll write and invite him to come on and meet us in Los Angeles, and then he can join Fuzzier and Alexander on their trip," remarked Mr. Dalken. But he wondered what Polly meant by this unusual reference to Tom. Had he dreamed that she had been peeved by Jack, when he had said the girls could not find any wise young man to propose to them, he would have laughed at her. Polly had been spoiled during the past two years, by having so many admirers wait upon her; and now, barring Jack's indifferent attentions, having no young man hovering about, made her miss her faithful beau. Per-

haps this lack of attention caused her to write an unusually kind letter to Tom. But she did not mention the possibility of his coming to join the two men who planned to go on to South America —she left that to Dalky, because she had no desire to be held responsible for Tom, after he should arrive in California.

Eleanor had received a letter that day, too, but she had not mentioned it to any one. It had been forwarded from New York, the day after the tourists left that city for the west. Then it went to Oak Creek, and there it was sent on to the Denver hotel. Again it had been forwarded to Santa Fé, and then to Albuquerque. It reached Gallup the same day Eleanor left there, but it was not forwarded to Flagstaff for several days, and when it did arrive at the latter place, Eleanor had just gone to Grand Canyon. Now it reached her with its envelope covered with postmarks, and the original address almost obliterated. But the girl flushed as she recognized Paul Stewart's scrawly writing.

Slipping the letter inside her blouse, she waited an opportunity to get away where she might read it undisturbed by others. Now she had this opportunity, and she made the most of it.

She hastily opened the sealed envelope and smiled as she found the familiar scrawl that covered a double sheet of paper. As she read how Paul had succeeded in his engineering work in the Rockies of Southern Colorado, she felt proud of him and his fight against poverty. He went on to say that all he needed now was the big opportunity to prove what was in him. When that chance came, he was ready to take it by the forelock, and as soon as he had made good his claims, he would be making tracks in the direction of a certain girl he knew—one who thought nothing of money, but a lot of a real man! "Still," wrote Paul, "I cannot ask that girl to have me unless I have something more than brag to prove what I am capable of doing. In case you hear our old friend Dalken mention any plans he may have on the board where a wide-awake mining engineer is needed, I trust you will not forget to recommend your devoted lover and soon-to-be husband."

Eleanor gasped at this daring signature, but she rather enjoyed such a high-handed manner. Now she remembered that Mr. Fuzzier and Dodo's father were planning to go to South America as soon as they reached California. And

she lost no time in driving a wedge for Paul to accompany them on this trip.

She opened the subject nearest her heart that evening, and began by asking Mr. Dalken how many men might be allowed to go with the two men.

"Why do you ask? Polly wants to get rid of one admirer, and I suppose you have another one to get rid of, eh?" laughed he.

"Yes, that's it!" retorted Eleanor. "But this one is a wonderful engineer, and he has an exceptional position in South Colorado at the present time. However, I might persuade him to give that up, if we could show him any advantage in going to South America with our friends."

Mr. Dalken smiled. He was good at guessing, and he guessed Eleanor's secret. However, he understood her reluctance to admit any interest in Paul Stewart, and he acted accordingly.

"If the young man you are thinking of is a first-rate *young* engineer, there will be a splendid opening for him with us down there. Fuzzy and Alexander and I were talking about it to-day. I said I would like to get all the young engineers I had met through my acquaintance with the Brewsters to go down there and make their for-

tunes—as they will be able to do in such a project. Now you might write this young man and have him write to me to reserve any opening for him which may come up. If he could get to California and meet us there before Fuzzier sails, he might prove to be a valuable man to take down there."

"Oh, Dalky! Thank you so much. Now I'll have *you* write to Paul and tell him exactly what you told me. It will bear more weight, coming from you, of course. And it will let me out of appearing over-anxious to encourage him to make good, see my point."

Mr. Dalken laughed. "Yes, I see your point, Nolla, and I must add that you are too particular —even as Polly is. These young men who are so devoted to you girls now, may change their minds once they reach South America and find how lovely and willing to be loved are the girls there. You may never have Paul yearn to come back, after having a southern beauty make love to him."

"In that case, he is not worth pining for. If a man cannot love a girl as well when he is absent from her as he does when he is present with her, he is not to be trusted in love," declared Eleanor, tossing her head.

"I don't know but that you are right, Nolla!" said Mr. Dalken.

"I *know* I am, Dalky. Life is long, and love is fleeting, so it is best to find a mate who is loyal and true in all circumstances, don't you think so?" said wise Eleanor.

"You're a good judge, and if all girls were as thoughtful, before they became engaged, there would be less marital troubles," agreed Mr. Dalken.

CHAPTER XV

DALKY TAKES A VACATION

HAVING concluded his business with the two representatives of Sam White's estate, Mr. Dalken decided that he had earned a rest. Therefore, when the young people asked, "Where next?" he replied: "To Castle Hot Springs."

This came as a surprise, because Jack had planned that day that they would all go on to Phœnix, where not only business could be attended to by the three men in the party, but the younger members would find every kind of sport they might care to enjoy.

Dalky's wish was law, however, and that evening found his entire party domiciled at the high-class hotel located at the Springs. The main feature of interest seen from the autos on that drive from Hot Springs Junction, where they left the train, was the great varieties of cacti, some of which towered as high as twenty-five feet above the ground.

Hot Springs was an ideal resort for resting, and Dalky wished he might remain there a month. The golf and tennis, the open air swimming pools, the delightful horseback rides to points of interest, brought a sense of peace to the three men who had raced here and there in Illinois, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona ever since they met together at Chicago. The week spent at the Springs did more, perhaps, to stimulate Mr. Dalken's keen and ever alert brain than anything he could have done.

Mrs. Courtney was not a devotee of swimming in ready-made pools, but she preferred a nice, comfortable bathtub. Therefore, she generally watched the others swim whenever they took the plunge. It needed no more than the first trial to show Mr. Dalken that he might give that time to better purposes, if he went for his swim before breakfast in the morning. So, the second day of the tourists' stay at Hot Springs, found all but Mrs. Courtney and Mr. Dalken running to the pool about ten o'clock in the morning.

"Why, Dalky! Aren't you coming in with us?" cried Polly.

"I've taken my dip—before breakfast," returned he.

Eleanor sent Polly a knowing glance, and then plunged from the diving board. Jack and the three girls enjoyed the fun to the utmost, and thus they forgot to keep an eye upon the two watchers who usually received more than their share of attention from the girls.

Mrs. Alexander never came near the swimming pool, and Algy, of course, would not think of doing anything that his patroness did not approve; hence they were sitting on the verandah of the hotel, vainly believing they were the center of envious eyes, whereas the other guests then lounging about the wide porch never thought of the over-dressed lady and her insignificant escort.

Mr. Fuzzier and Mr. Alexander were splashing and diving about in the pool, and this left Mr. Dalken and his companion free to follow their own inclinations. By the time the two were missed from their recent post at the edge of the swimming pool, it was impossible to learn what had become of them.

The truth of the matter was that Mr. Dalken invited his friend to go for an auto drive to the Junction, where he wished to attend to some personal shopping. And Mrs. Courtney, having nothing better to do at the moment, accepted his

friendly invitation. The distance to the Junction being about twenty-four miles, and the day being balmy and beautiful, the chauffeur was advised to drive slowly and give his passengers due opportunity to view the wonderful country they would pass through. Thus it took the entire morning before the two runaways were able to reach the hotel again, and this unaccounted for absence gave rise to all sorts of speculations in the minds of the girls.

Directly after coming from the dressing rooms of the bath-houses, Eleanor whispered to her two companions: "Now I know why Dalky wanted this vacation. He was head over heels in attending to financial matters of the utmost importance, and suddenly, when he found that Atchison man making up to Mrs. Courtney, he takes us all away from the busy world and loses a week here at the Hot Springs. He knows he will have his chance here to carry out his plans—you know what, girls!"

Polly knew, but she was not easily persuaded that Eleanor's interpretation was correct. "I really believe Dalky was tired out—you must remember that *we* had a few weeks in which to rest after the cruise from South America, but Dalky

went right on racing about New York, holding conferences and attending to important business matters. From the moment we left New York City on the Limited, he has been working ceaselessly—either with brain or body, and that tells on one, unless you take a rest. At the same time, I doubt if he would have thought of resting at this ideal resort had it not been for Mrs. Courtney. Now it remains to be seen how near right Nolla is."

"I agree with Polly—Dalky is too matter-of-fact to plan any romantic affair here at the Springs. If he wants to ask some one to marry him, I bet he'd do it right in front of us all," said Dodo.

"There you are mistaken!" exclaimed Polly and Eleanor together. And Polly added: "Dalky has more romance in his make-up than you give him credit for. The only trouble is that it has been suppressed by the unhappy conditions of his first marriage."

"You might say the same about Mrs. Courtney, too!" declared Eleanor. "If it were not that both of them have had such lamentable experiences, I am sure they would have shown each other plainly, long before this, that they were

ideally mated, and that would have ended all our worries."

Dodo laughed merrily and then added: "Nothing to worry about, Nolla. It isn't as though he was your beau."

"No; but can't you see that it does matter? If Dalky is happily married to Mrs. Courtney, who is his other half-soul if there is such a thing, it stands to reason that Polly and I shall always be welcome additions to their little nest. Should Dalky marry some woman of whom we know nothing, what chance is there for our future welcome?" Eleanor frowned at such a dreadful supposition, and her two friends laughed.

"You may be married first, Nolla, and then you can invite Dalky to visit you," ventured Dodo.

"No, Doe! Polly and I have sworn to see dear Dalky happily settled first, before we may give a thought to husbands for ourselves," explained Eleanor, seriously.

"Wouldn't it be queer if Dalky should confess he was in love with Polly? He certainly likes her more than any one else I know. If Polly became Mrs. Dalken we would sure have a good time with her," laughed Dodo.

"Why!" gasped Polly, horrified. "You talk like a—a—a I don't know what!"

Eleanor laughed aloud. "That is sacrilege, Dodo. Polly reveres Dalky too much to ever dream of wasting his life by thinking of her for a future bride."

"Besides, there is Tom Latimer to be reckoned with. If Dalky ever carried out such a plan as I just mentioned, Tom Latimer would have his heart—like Shylock, you know," giggled Dodo, enjoying Polly's annoyance and horror.

"But Shylock never got that heart," added Eleanor. "Neither would Tom get Dalky's—but such things are out of the question."

"I should think they were!" snapped Polly. "You girls seem to be beau-crazy, and I have no patience with you—not a bit." So saying, she walked quickly away by herself.

When the three girls met again it was at luncheon time. Mr. Dalken and Mrs. Courtney were ascending the front steps of the wide verandah, but there were no tell-tale expressions upon the faces of either one. Eleanor searched in vain for the blush that might inform her whether Mrs. Courtney planned to become Mrs. Dalken.

Mrs. Alexander learned that Mrs. Courtney

had accompanied the young folks to the swimming pool every morning, and she immediately conjectured that she did this in order to wear a fetching gown and carry her white wrap—white was *so* becoming to elderly women!

Then she heard that Mr. Dalken had escorted her there, and Mr. Fuzzier had come up out of the water to sit upon the bank and talk with her. This was enough incentive for her to plan how she would take Algy, and walk to the pool in the morning, and show off her lovely white serge gown and suede shoes. She had a flapper-stick which she had used at Colorado Springs, fondly believing herself the envy of all the women. This she would carry the following morning.

She knew better than to breathe a word of her plan to any one else, but directly after breakfast the next morning, she went to her room and began to dress for the parade she had decided upon.

Algy had been commanded to sit and wait for his patroness, and he obeyed just as any good little poodle would do. He sat slowly rocking in a huge, reed, porch chair, vacantly staring at a great stucco pillar of the pergola. Not that there was aught to see upon the pillar, but it served to interest his mind as well as anything.

The group of swimmers left the hotel to go to the bathhouses, and soon after this Mrs. Alexander came out of her room, dressed as she had planned the previous evening. She carried her imported flapper-stick, and she also carried a most artistic basket which contained some wool and a partly knitted scarf. She knew nothing about a knitting needle, but the basket was a beautiful Indian specimen recently purchased by Dodo at Grand Canyon, and Dodo's knitting might lead guests to believe that the lady carrying the work was accomplished in the art. Other ladies sitting upon the verandah during morning hours had compared their knitting and embroidery, and Mrs. Alexander understood it was quite the proper thing to do.

Algy hopped up the moment he saw Mrs. Alexander approach, and she, in order to be impressive before the group of ladies busily at work upon their handicraft, handed him the basket with the admonition:

"Do be careful, Algy, of the ball of wool. If it falls out it may ravel all my knitting, you know. And that stitch is a very intricate one to do."

Algy took the basket as though it were some

sacred relic, and, as he toddled after Mrs. Alexander, he caused smiles upon the faces of the ladies watching the little scene. After the two had gone down the foot-path, those upon the verandah left little unsaid about the vanity of the lady and the vacuity of the young man.

Mrs. Alexander felt sure she had caused a feeling of envy in the hearts of every woman upon that verandah, and this certainty made her feel satisfied with herself. As she reached the pool where an iron hand-rail protects watchers from falling into the water, she smiled to herself, thinking how much better she looked in comparison with Mrs. Courtney, who stood upon the platform with Mr. Dalken.

Mr. Alexander had just scrambled out of the pool and now was mounting to the platform, when Mr. Fuzzier, at his heels, spoke to him. "Your wife is standing over there watching you, Alex."

"Umph! There's safety in distance!" grunted Mr. Alexander.

Mrs. Alexander saw that the three men seemed to be devoting their attention to Mrs. Courtney, and this was not as it should be, thought she. Hence she turned to Algy, and said:

"I am going over to join my husband, Algy," and she nodded in the direction of the group upon the diving-platform.

Algy followed as usual, carrying the ornamental basket upon his arm. In walking too near Mrs. Alexander, however, he inadvertently stubbed his toe and stumbled. To steady himself he caught at her arm, and unconsciously dropped the basket.

Having righted himself once more, he stooped and picked up the basket, but he failed to notice that the ball of worsted rolled out and remained caught under a tuft of grass beside the walk. When he started again for the platform, the ball began to unroll its length of wool, and the scarf also began to respond to the tugging at it as it remained in the basket, and the stitches gradually ravelled out. By the time Algy joined those standing upon the platform, half of Dodo's pretty scarf had diminished into its original strand of wool.

Mrs. Alexander swung her handsome cane aimlessly to and fro to attract Mrs. Courtney's attention, since that was the only reason for her carrying it, but her husband also saw it.

"By the Great Horned Spoon, Maggie!

How'd you ever come to fetch a walkin' stick? Folks will think you are locoed."

But his wife paid no heed to his remark—he was too ignorant of the ways of fashionable society to cause her any concern. She turned to prattle to Mrs. Courtney about the jealousy of the women upon the hotel verandah—"They are so envious of one who has better clothes, you know, that I really had to leave them. Did you ever see such dowdies as they are?"

Mrs. Courtney had not noticed, and she admitted it. At the same time she had to control a desire to tell Mrs. Alexander how unsuitably *she* was dressed for a simple morning recreation hour. Perhaps Mr. Alexander would have spoken for her, had not Algy diverted all attention to himself.

Jack had been watching the slow progress of Algy and his companion from the pathway to the platform, and he planned, when he saw the young man so near the water, that he would swim close to the side and begin to splash, so that the water would sprinkle him.

Algy had been intent upon the conversation between the two ladies, and now, when he felt the drops of water falling upon him, he looked aloft,

thinking a sprinkler or shower must be leaking upon him. Seeing nothing overhead, he glanced down and saw some one kicking and sending up great showers of water. Algy felt that it was his duty to speak to this thoughtless swimmer, and to warn him that well-groomed persons upon the platform would be made uncomfortable.

"Heah, you! I say! Don't cha see what youah ah doing? My white flannels are all spotted, and the ladies——" At this moment Algy's foot slid upon the wet, slippery plank, and in another second he had made a head dive—basket and wool, and all!

Since he detested water in quantity sufficient for swimming, Algy was unprepared for his impromptu bath. It was quite deep beneath the platform, to accommodate those who wished to dive, and now the frightened youth came to the surface spluttering and throwing hands above his head in a wild attempt to clutch at some support.

Mrs. Alexander received the first genuine shock in many moons, and she acted like the old-time Maggie whom Mr. Alexander remembered with regret. "My goodness, Ebeneezer!" cried she, forgetting the expensive cane in her fear for

Algy's life, and using it to hold down for him to hold to. "Jump in and save him quick!"

"That ain't the ocean, Maggie," retorted her husband. "A little warm water won't hurt his head."

"Oh, you cruel man. Won't some one save the boy?" pleaded she.

"Jack!" shouted Mr. Dalken, "swim up and give him help to climb up on the steps."

Jack had been hovering near enough to Algy to grip him when he had been sufficiently tested, and now he reached out and grabbed him by the coat collar and propelled him over to the steep steps which led up from the pool.

"There you are, my son," laughed Jack, as he tried to show Algy how he was to hold fast to the handrail.

But the frightened young man appeared to have lost all sense, for he merely hung limp from Jack's grasp. After a short time of having to hold up his weight, Jack got tired, and said: "I'm going to drop him if he won't help himself. I can't carry him out as though he had been drowned, Dalky!"

The word "drowned" seemed to rouse the dormant brain in Algy, and he frantically caught hold

of anything within reach. Fortunately it happened to be the steps, and soon he had his feet upon them. Then Jack boosted from behind, while Mrs. Alexander caught hold of his hair and pulled from above.

"Ouch! Ouch!" screamed Algy, but he feared to let go his grasp on the ladder in order to make the hand clutching his long blonde hair release its hold.

Thus he came up over the top of the platform, a dripping, drowned-looking, lank young man, the tears streaming from his eyes, and the water streaming from every wrinkle in his sopping clothes. He presented such a pathetic yet comic picture that his friends wavered between a desire to laugh and a desire to sympathize. Eventually both were indulged, but Algy paid no heed to either.

"What shall I do?" wailed he, shivering as he sent a glance of terror at the pool.

"Go right into the bath-house and ask the attendant to give you a rub-down and dry your clothes," advised Mr. Dalken.

But Algy seemed to have had his last bit of sense washed out of him, and he stood shivering without making a move to do as he had been ad-

vised. Then Mr. Alexander took a hand in the case.

"Come along there, A. A. A.! If you don't get off this wet platform, you'll slip back in the pool again. Now come on!"

As though the threat of more water roused him from sleep, Algy hurried after Mr. Alexander. Then it was seen that he still clutched the Indian basket; and the strand of wool, having so entangled itself through the dive and the rescue, stretched and stretched, and at last it snapped! When Mrs. Alexander saved her daughter's work-basket, still dangling from Algy's hand, the scarf had been unravelled, and but one row of stitches remained upon the needles in the basket.

"Why, Ma! Isn't that my work-basket which A. A. A. has upon his arm?" exclaimed Dodo, astonishment uppermost in her expression.

"I think it is, Dodo. I used it for my work, this morning, but I did not remove your knitting."

"Your work! What work was that, Ma?" asked Dodo, in amazement.

"Oh! A bit of work that I wanted to do this morning. Something of which you know nothing. I fear it is gone now—in the pool, likely," and Mrs. Alexander sighed with regret.

CHAPTER XVI

ARRIVALS IN LOS ANGELES

Mr. Dalken must have made important headway in his plans of engaging Mrs. Courtney's heart during the short vacation at Hot Springs, because Polly and Eleanor noticed thereafter how they managed to secure tête-à-têtes and exchange quiet though understanding glances when they believed themselves unseen. It would have been difficult, however, to escape the watchful eyes of Polly and Eleanor, because this romance was exactly what they had hoped to perfect during the past two years.

The trip from Hot Springs to Phœnix was not very long, but quite long enough to give Mr. Dalken an opportunity to sit beside Mrs. Courtney and engage her entire attention with what he had to say. It seems he had need of papers and plans in this conversation, and Polly gladly believed he was explaining about his interests, in order to prove to Mrs. Courtney that she would not be

making a mistake by trusting her future to his wisdom and care.

The Salt River Valley, which covers an area as large as the combined states of Connecticut, Delaware and Rhode Island, was one of great loveliness. During the ride to Phœnix, Mr. Fuzzier explained various sights to the girls.

"This great natural gorge of the Salt River has been utilized by the United States to provide the largest irrigating system in the world. When we motor from Phœnix, we will stop at Roosevelt Dam, where the waters are reserved in a vast lake named after the famous American, Roosevelt. The dam is 1,125 feet wide, and the curved wall at its base is about 168 feet thick—just think of that! The height of this tremendous dam is 284 feet, but there are wide spillways to carry off flood-water. We will motor out there and show you this wonder of modern engineering." After that the girls looked with renewed interest at the Salt River which flows by Phœnix.

There were many sights to see in Phœnix and the country round about. The girls found shopping in the up-to-date stores a pleasure, and their wardrobe was replenished without delay. They visited the capitol, which was a handsome edifice;

"OUCH! OUCH!" SCREAMED ALGY.

and the time they rode to Camelback Mountain they spent a night at Ingleside Inn.

But the most enjoyable trip of all those about Phœnix, was the one to Roosevelt Lake and the Dam. They motored there, as Mr. Fuzzier had promised them, and the sight of the huge project so successfully built and operated, caused even the foolish Mrs. Alexander and the vapid Algy to stare in silence at man's ingenuity and capabilities.

"When one sees what is possible to mere man, it enthuses one with great ideas. No wonder you are so keen over Mr. Fuzzier's plans to develop the interior of Colombia, Mr. Dalken," said Mrs. Courtney, enthusiastically.

"Look at this tremendous work, which had to form first in the mind of man, and then be constructed stone by stone, and by means of the hands which had to obey the mandates of man's brain. Without the power to think correctly, where would this completed wonder be?" remarked Mr. Dalken, seriously.

That man-made wonder impressed the girls and Jack more than the natural wonders found in the great southwest, and all the way back to Phœnix, they were discussing the power to think.

Another trip made while making Phœnix their headquarters, was the outing to Hotel San Marcos. Here the entire party enjoyed the recreations and social life which is possible through the exclusiveness of the hotel and its cottages.

During the time which Mr. Dalken and his two associates had to devote to interviews and business conferences with men of affairs in Phœnix, the girls and Jack enjoyed tennis and golf at the Country Club; cards of introduction for them had been presented by a bank president, who was deeply interested in the South American plan of development.

Finally Mr. Dalken announced that he had finished his business in Arizona and was ready to go on to California.

"At last!" sighed Polly, for whom this entire trip meant a visit to the Golden Gate State.

"To hear you, one might think you expected to meet your fate in California," laughed Jack, as the train started for Cadiz, where they would continue on the Santa Fé lines to Los Angeles.

"Maybe she will—Tom Latimer will meet us there," announced Mr. Dalken.

"No! Really?" cried Eleanor, anxiously watching Mr. Dalken's face to learn if any one

else might be expected to meet them in California.

"Yes, Tom writes he will be on hand shortly after we arrive. And I also heard from a few other young engineers to whom I extended an invitation to join Mr. Fuzzier's party to South America. I have received acceptances from several of these. I wonder if you girls will care to meet Paul Stewart—Anne's brother, you know? I haven't seen him since he visited my apartment that winter, and was the cause of Jack's jealous feud."

Jack and Polly laughed at the remembrance, but Eleanor eagerly exclaimed: "Well, what about him?"

"Why, he is going with Fuzzy, to show what is in him. I, personally, believe he will turn out to be one of our most valuable young men down there. Anyway, he will have the chance of his life."

"Oh, goody! goody!" cried Eleanor, clapping her hands excitedly.

Her friends smiled in sympathy, because they surmised, though Eleanor never confided to any one, that she was more than interested in Paul's success for his *own* future.

"Yes, Nolla, and that happy-go-lucky brother

of yours—Pete Maynard, is joining this group of engineers, too. That ought to make Dodo happy, since she always thought he needed something besides money to bring out the mettle he has in him," added Mr. Dalken.

This was a genuine surprise to the others, because no one knew that Dodo was acquainted with Pete Maynard. Dodo flushed and stammered: "I met Pete the time Ma stopped in Chicago to enjoy society there. Pete and I found a lot in common to talk of—you girls, and the college friends we all know, with whom he went through the engineering class."

"Was that all you two had in common?" laughed Eleanor.

"Oh, well, we are both democratic, you know, and Pete is not as attached to mere money as you all think he is. Anyway, Ma didn't approve of him, until she heard he was a Maynard of *the* Maynards of Chicago—a password to society, I'll have you know, Nolla."

"Don't I know it, only too well! My mother and your Ma should have been bosom friends, Dodo, because they think alike about so many things. But, tell me; why did Pete never write me about knowing you, Doe?"

"How can I answer that question? You must ask him when you reach California," laughed Dodo.

"There are so many important things waiting for us to do in California, I can hardly wait to get there," declared Polly.

The scenery across country from Phœnix to Barstow, where the railroad branched for the two important points in California—San Francisco being one terminus and Los Angeles the other—was wonderful, and there was not much inclination to talk of other things. The ride over the Mojave Desert seemed to take the tourists from the New World and drop them upon the Sahara, or the great tractless deserts of the East.

Having turned to the southern terminus, the train flew past great orange groves, where, in places, the girls could have plucked the fruit by stretching forth a hand from the windows. The fine palm trees also grew close to the railway tracks, and the magnificent flowers and ferns almost screened the train at places.

"My! It is just what I pictured it," sighed Polly, with fervor. And her friends agreed silently with her opinion.

There is no time in which to describe all the

joys of that arrival in California. Between days spent in continual pleasure-seeking, and going sight-seeing to one place and another, the weeks passed away. During the most of the time spent in Los Angeles, Mr. Dalken and his two associates were deeply immersed in their business projects. Only in the evenings and on Sundays did they take time to enjoy the society of the girls and the ladies.

But the plan for the development was succeeding far beyond Mr. Dalken's hopes, and the three men were greatly elated at the promises the future held for them. Mrs. Courtney felt a corresponding glad relief, but Polly and Eleanor thought this was due to her interest in Mr. Dalken.

Quite unexpectedly Mr. Dalken announced to his friends, one night, that it would be necessary to go to San Diego for a time—a week, or more. This was welcome news, because all wished to go there for a visit, yet no one had felt it right to suggest it, because the plan might interfere with the business plans of the men.

"We find there are a number of realty men in San Diego who will be greatly interested in our proposition. Seeing that the farther south we go

in California, the nearer the scene of our future development we are, it stands to reason that investors in Southern California are more readily convinced of our ultimate success. They will be enabled to open up better and larger fields of commerce between these ports and those of Colombia, and having a great and powerful organization to back up the South American development, makes the new project secure for investment. So San Diego will be our next stopping place," explained Mr. Dalken.

"And you really feel certain now, Mr. Dalken, that we have no further cause to worry over the result of this tremendous speculation?" asked Mrs. Courtney, with an expression of relief.

Polly and Eleanor exchanged glances, for they were sure that she was glad poor, dear Dalky would be relieved of the strain of making good, but they were speedily destined to be surprised.

"Quite contrary to failure, dear Mrs. Courtney. You have every promise of clearing thirty per cent this very moment, on all the money you invested with us. Should you care to sell out your own stock to-night, you would clear up a hundred thousand dollars. Even my scatter-brained valet, lounging over there, did a clever thing when

he disobeyed my advice and got Fuzzier to invest most of his capital in this company. As for the Latimers and Brewsters, Mr. Maynard, the Ashbys, Evans, Fabians, and all along the line of our tried and trusting friends, I am thankful to be able to announce that their faith is not misplaced. But it made it doubly hard upon me, when I learned how every one of them insisted upon risking their money upon Fuzzier's and my 'high-flier,' because I felt that it would never do to lose an opportunity to turn a trick. Had I failed, I am sure I would have blown myself to bits—to avoid facing my friends. Thanks to Mrs. Courtney's extensive list of acquaintances throughout the western resorts where we stopped, and Furzier's list of financial magnates, to say nothing of my friends, and Alexander's associates, in land and mine deals, we now have interested the most important, as well as the most intelligent representatives along the line from Chicago to California. By the time the boys arrive in Los Angeles, we will be back from San Diego, and all will be staged for one great send-off to the travelers bound for Colombia."

Thus Polly and Eleanor heard with amazement the cause of the confidential chats between

Mrs. Courtney and their adored Dalky, and it is doubtful whether they would not have preferred to see the "great plan" go to smash if by that means they might have heard an engagement announced between their pet friends.

The visit to San Diego fulfilled its promise—not alone to the financiers, but to the sight-seers as well. Ten days given to outdoor sports at San Diego and touring to every possible point of interest in or about the city, proved to be quite enough for the girls.

Upon reaching Los Angeles once more, where they were to await the young engineers, the girls admitted that they were almost ready to retire to a sanatorium to recuperate from such an extended tour.

"There's only one more city for us to clean up, girls," was Mr. Dalken's encouraging reply. "When we get to San Francisco you will have two months to do the town, and I shall have ample time in which to use the magnet of our company upon the rich investors to be found there. Fuzzy and Alex. will be in the land of magnificent ideals before then, and their reports will help sell our remaining stock. What an unusual and wonderful thing it would be if we were to announce a

paid-up capitalization for all our shares of stock before we began operations down in South America!"

"Perhaps your success is due to the implicit faith and respect your friends place in you and Mr. Fuzzier and Mr. Alexander," remarked Mrs. Courtney, with an admiring glance at Mr. Dalken.

"We thank you, fair lady, for your opinion," returned he.

At this moment a bell-boy paged Mr. Dalken, and he beckoned him to approach. It proved to be a telegram from Denver. Having permission to do so, he opened it at once, and then read aloud. "Pete, Paul and self leaving here for Los Angeles on night express. Tom Latimer."

"Hurrah!" cried several voices in chorus. Jack grinned, then he remarked teasingly: "I bet Polly and Nolla and Dodo will break their necks trying to get those newcomers to propose to them before they sail for South America. Poor girls—this tour must have been awful with no one to admire them or make love to while away the dreary days we've had!"

THE END

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